



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2022) 2416 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Strasbourg, 7 June 2022

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2416th meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 3 May 2022

(afternoon)

PV(2022) 2416 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Tuesday 3 May 2022 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.11 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	Items 8 to 11
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms GABRIEL	Member	
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	Items 8 to 11 (in part)
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

(3 May 2022)

Absent:

Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President
Mr REYNDERS	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member

The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission:

Ms LOTSON	Member of Mr BORRELL's staff	
Ms ASTERIADI	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Items 1 to 8 (in part)
Ms PETSCH	Member of Mr VÁRHELYI's staff	
Mr ŠATŪNAS	Chef de cabinet to Mr SINKEVIČIUS	

The following also sat in:

Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr MAMER	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr FLOSDORFF	Executive Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr WHELAN	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 9 and 10
Ms HOPMEIER	Member of the PRESIDENT's staff	Item 8
Mr VALERO	Secretariat-General	

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms DEPREZ, Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2022) 2416/FINAL; SEC(2022) 2416/FINAL)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(RCC(2022) 2416)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 2 May 2022.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2414th and 2415th meetings of 5 and 27 April 2022 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2022) 113)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 29 April 2022 (RCC(2022) 113).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Digital Finance: Digital operational resilience for the financial sector (DORA) and amendment of Regulations (EC) No 1060/2009, (EU) No 648/2012, (EU) No 600/2014 and (EU) No 909/2014 (Regulation) – KELLEHER report – 2020/0266 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 132/2.

- **Digital finance – Markets in Crypto-assets (MiCA) and amendment of Directive (EU) 2019/1937 (Regulation) – BERGER report – 2020/0265 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 134/2.

- **Adequate minimum wages in the European Union (Directive) – RADTKE & JONGERIUS report – 2020/0310 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 133.

- **Improving the gender balance among non-executive directors of companies listed on stock exchanges and related measures (Directive) – REGNER & WOLTERS report – 2012/0299 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 123/2.

- **Single Market For Digital Services (Digital Services Act) and amendment of Directive 2000/31/EC (Regulation) – SCHALDEMOSE report – 2020/0361 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 100/2.

- **Transitional rules for the packaging and labelling of veterinary medicinal products authorised in accordance with Directive 2001/82/EC and Regulation (EC) No 726/2004 (Regulation) –2022/0053 (COD)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 261.

- **2020 Discharge (53 reports)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 252.

- **Oral question O-000015/2022 – The impact of the war against Ukraine on women**

Line set out in SP(2022) 263.

The Commission approved the lines set out for the following points, for transmission to Parliament:

- **Commission replies to the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its part-session of January 2022 (2nd and last part)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 255.

- **Commission replies to the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its part-session of March I 2022 (Part I)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 254/3.

- **Commission replies to the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its part-session of February 2022 (Part II)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 259/3.

The Commission approved the line set out for the following point, for transmission to the European Economic and Social Committee:

- **Replies to the opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee - plenary session of December 2021**

Line set out in SC(2022) 12/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Foreign subsidies distorting the internal market (Regulation) – HANSEN report – 2021/0114 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2022) 137/2.

- **2030 Policy Programme ‘Path to the Digital Decade’ (Decision) – DLABAJOVÁ report – 2021/0293 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2022) 124.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 as regards the decisions of European standardisation organisations concerning European standards and European standardisation deliverables (Regulation) – HAHN report – 2022/0021(COD)**

Information set out in SI(2022) 136.

- **Question time (Commission) – Europe’s Energy Autonomy: the strategic importance of renewables and energy interconnections and efficiency**

Information set out in SP(2022) 262/2.

- **Draft text for the future European Union-United Kingdom agreement in respect of Gibraltar – Circulation of persons**

Information set out in SI(2022) 138.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2022) 19)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2022) 19 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 27 April 2022.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2022) 176 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 25 April and 1 May 2022.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2022) 182 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 25 April and 1 May 2022.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2022) 178 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 25 April and 1 May 2022 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2022) 179 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 2 and 6 May 2022.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2022) 180 AND /2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(SEC(2022) 23 AND /2)

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr HAHN presented a proposal for an administrative decision that was being submitted directly to the College for approval.

It was proposed to appoint Mr Thomas SKORDAS to the post of Deputy Director-General of DG Communication Networks, Content and Technology.

Mr HAHN highlighted the great skills, outstanding career and recognised expertise of Mr SKORDAS, which would be valuable assets in his new post.

**7.1. DG COMMUNICATION NETWORKS, CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGY
– APPOINTMENT OF A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT
GRADE AD15/16
(PERS(2022) 25 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Director-General in charge of Directorates A, C, E and H in DG Communication Networks, Content and Technology (PERS(2022) 25).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 2 and 3 March 2022 (PERS(2022) 25/2 and /3).

The Commission then examined the applicants' qualifications for the post. It also considered their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr BRETON, it then decided to appoint Mr Thomas SKORDAS to the post.

This decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

**7.2. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF THE
CONTROLLER OF PROCEDURAL GUARANTEES IN THE CONTEXT
OF INVESTIGATIONS CONDUCTED BY THE EUROPEAN**

ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE**(PERS(2021) 56 TO /3)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 1 of PERS(2022) 23 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided:

- to appoint Ms Julia LAFFRANQUE as the Controller of procedural guarantees in the context of investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office, for a non-renewable five-year term;
- to appoint Ms LAFFRANQUE as a Special Adviser, administratively attached to the Secretariat of the Supervisory Committee of the European Anti-Fraud Office, for an initial period of two years, which may be renewed up to the end of her five-year term of office;
- to authorise Mr HAHN, the Member of the Commission responsible, by derogation from the second paragraph of point 6 of Commission Decision C(2007) 6655, to amend Ms LAFFRANQUE's contract in the event of urgent and duly justified needs, subject to the availability of sufficient budgetary appropriations;
- to authorise the Director-General of DG Human Resources and Security to implement this decision by signing the Special Adviser contract on behalf of the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.3. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF A LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF HEAD OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO RUSSIA (AD14/15)

(PERS(2022) 24)

(3 May 2022)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to approve the list of candidates for the post of Head of the European Union Delegation to Russia (at grade AD14/15) set out in PERS(2022) 24.

The competent authority of the European External Action Service (EEAS) would make the final appointment on the basis of this list.

This decision would take effect immediately.

7.4. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Commission took note of the decision taken by the Appointing Authority to appoint Mr Pierre LOAËC to the post of Head of the Regional Representation of the European Commission in Marseille, France.

This decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST, SECURING SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH, UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF THE EU'S OUTERMOST REGIONS

(COM(2022) 198 TO /3; SWD(2022) 133; SWD(2022) 134; RCC(2022) 117)

Mr DOMBROVSKIS presented the Communication on a renewed strategic partnership with the outermost regions, which updated the strategy from the 2017 Commission Communication.

The outermost regions were far away from mainland Europe, but were very

important for the EU. They were characterised by a young population, unique biodiversity and plentiful sources of renewable energy, but also by uneven levels of development. For example, the GDP of Martinique and Mayotte in 2020 was 76% and 30% respectively of the EU average. In addition, unemployment rates were much higher in these regions than in continental Europe, especially among the young.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS noted that that day's Communication was presented against a complex backdrop, as the EU gradually recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic and with the impact of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine on the global economy, the scale of which was still unclear, certain to be systemic.

In that context, the outermost regions were particularly vulnerable. Like the rest of the EU, they would have to meet the challenges of the twin green and digital transitions in the coming years.

The rationale for the Communication was largely based on the findings of the Commission's recently published 8th cohesion report, in which particular attention was paid to the outermost regions.

The Commission was proposing a division of labour with the Member States, inviting the three Member States with outermost regions to fully play their role in designing strategies and means to promote the development of those regions. Such a policy had to involve all stakeholders, in this case the regions themselves. It was therefore important for the EU and the Member States to demonstrate their commitment to implementing strategies for the recovery and growth of these regions, according to their own vision of their future, depending on their specific situation.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS concluded by stressing that, for the strategy to be a success, the key word was partnership, which meant a partnership between the Commission, the Member States concerned and the regions themselves, as well as a partnership among the European institutions.

Ms FERREIRA began by pointing out that five million European citizens lived in the EU's nine outermost regions, in three of its Member States. Their particular situation, acknowledged by Article 349 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, meant that the Commission had to cater to their specificities in its policies and partner with them in developing their unique potential.

This was not just an institutional obligation, but was necessary for the territorialisation of the Commission's political agenda in order to keep the EU cohesive and maintain the link with the inhabitants of those regions, in particular by taking account of the asymmetrical impact of European policies on the ground.

The strategy revisited the EU's policy approach to the outermost regions in a new spirit, proposed solutions to some old and some more recent structural issues, and took a fresh look at the strengths and comparative advantages of those regions and the best way to capitalise on them using the European tools available.

Ms FERREIRA pointed out that the outermost regions were the EU's outposts in the world. They were also the EU's 'business card' in that they projected its values, interests, dynamic and innovative economy, democratic practices and international policy, based on openness and good neighbourliness.

That day's Communication reflected this ambition well and, in the post-pandemic world, the outermost regions had a real chance of progress if they were given support for investment and reforms to move towards the digital transformation of their economy, education and even healthcare. There was no doubt that, with the right investment and digital services, one of the main obstacles to the development of the outermost regions, namely their remoteness, could be mitigated.

Ms FERREIRA referred to another shift caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which concerned the supply of basic goods and fuels, given that most of them reached the outermost regions by sea or air. The emphasis on resilience in EU policies should contribute to the food and energy autonomy of these regions through the development of locally produced organic food and renewable energy.

To that end, the EU had to help these regions overcome the structural difficulties that some still faced in terms of access to water, the internet and education, as well as in the areas of waste treatment, job creation and opportunities for young people. Although the situation was not the same across the nine outermost regions, all had socio-economic indicators well below the European and national averages.

She then addressed the main pillars and new elements of the strategy. The first element was to address basic needs, which meant putting people first. Young people in the outermost regions were a major asset for the EU, and the strategy provided for measures in many areas to realise their full potential.

The second new element was to set up dedicated funding streams for the outermost regions, by working with the Member States concerned and the regions themselves. For example a new youth grant scheme, funding to develop the blue economy and investment in innovation, research and biodiversity.

The third new element of the strategy aimed to strengthen partnership and dialogue with the outermost regions, to provide them with tailor-made advisory tools to help them make the most of the EU's instruments and to offer specific support for administrative capacity. The goal was to foster a future-proof economy to enable people to work and live in dynamic and innovative outermost regions.

Ms FERREIRA concluded her presentation by stressing that the implementation of this renewed strategy would depend on contributions from the whole Commission.

In the course of the brief discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the importance of focusing more on the many strengths and the potential of these regions, each operating in a specific ecosystem;
- the case for the EU to step up its action in favour of the outermost regions, particularly in the field of social policy, by always putting people first;

- the need to reflect on an alternative term to ‘outermost regions’, which had become somewhat obsolete since the regions were at the heart of several areas and policies that were essential for the EU, namely the maritime domain, space and cyberspace;
- a reference to a feeling among people in the outermost regions of being left behind and a call to be vigilant about this being reflected in the ballot box.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Ms FERREIRA for their excellent work.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2022) 198/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments, together with the staff working documents distributed as SWD(2022) 133 and SWD(2022) 134, the contents of which were noted.

**9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – A EUROPEAN HEALTH DATA SPACE: HARNESSING THE POWER OF HEALTH DATA FOR PEOPLE, PATIENTS AND INNOVATION
(COM(2022) 196 AND /2; RCC(2022) 118)**

**10. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON THE EUROPEAN HEALTH DATA SPACE
(COM(2022) 197 AND /2; SWD(2022) 130; SWD(2022) 131; SWD(2022) 132; SEC(2022) 196; RCC(2022) 118)**

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr SCHINAS presented to the College the Communication and proposal for a Regulation aimed at creating a European Health Data Space.

He stressed the importance of this initiative, which would create the first common European data space in a specific field. He saw it as one of the central building blocks of a strong and integrated European Health Union. It would help to achieve a leap forward in improving the way in which health data was used at EU level, empowering people to control and utilise their data in their home country or in other Member States and fostering a genuine single market for digital health services and products.

While the EU had a substantial amount of health data at its disposal, it had thus far not been able to exploit their potential for research, innovation, policy-making and regulatory activities, while ensuring full compliance with the EU's high data protection standards.

The fragmentation of health data within the EU also came at a cost. Every year, some EUR 14 billion were spent on medical images, 10% of which were unnecessary because they were often repeating procedures already carried out elsewhere.

The team effort successfully undertaken to develop and implement the Digital COVID Certificate had served as a model for the approach taken in developing the measures proposed that day. It had made it possible to integrate the various fundamental aspects of health data sharing, such as personal data protection and issues relating to the interoperability of national systems.

The primary aim of the European Health Data Space was to allow patients to have access to and utilise their data, in their home country and throughout the EU.

Secondly, the data, which would be anonymised, could be exploited for research, innovation, public health, policy-making and regulatory purposes, all within a strong legal framework.

Under strict conditions and in an environment that is secured, including against cyber-attacks, researchers, innovators, public institutions and businesses would have

access to large amounts of high-quality health data, which could be used to develop life-saving and increasingly personalised treatments, vaccines or medical devices while ensuring better access to healthcare.

Ms KYRIAKIDES stressed the importance of creating a European Health Data Space connecting all Member States, for the benefit of all EU citizens.

The COVID-19 pandemic had demonstrated the importance of digital tools and the possibilities digitisation offered for the future of healthcare. The pandemic had also shown how hard it was to share health data across the EU, which limited the means of combating the coronavirus.

She further explained the two objectives of the creation of the European Health Data Space.

Firstly, it would enable people to share information on their medical history, test results or prescriptions with hospitals and medical practitioners in and across Member States. She illustrated the many practical applications of this, citing the example of a person living in one Member State who fell ill in another. That person would be able to give access to his or her medical history to a health professional in the second Member State and obtain a prescription for the right medicine, with no need to repeat unnecessary medical exams. It would also allow those with rare diseases to consult specialists in other Member States by sharing their medical data in complete security.

These examples showed that the primary aim of data sharing would be to treat patients and save lives.

As well as being used for personal purposes, the sharing of health data could make a key contribution to the collective fight against health threats such as COVID-19 by accelerating the development of effective treatments and vaccines.

The second fundamental aim of the European Health Data Space was to revolutionise how health data was used for research, innovation and policy-making.

Data sharing would help to produce new life-saving treatments, medicines, medical devices and next-generation antibiotics; make progress on personalised medicine; apply innovative artificial intelligence health tools; and inform government decisions during pandemics, all in the interests of citizens and patients.

Ms KYRIAKIDES pointed out that, if the EU had had a European Health Data Space during the COVID-19 pandemic, governments would have been able to take better, evidence-based decisions, patients would have benefited from better care and vaccine developers would have been able to move faster in their research.

Given that personal data were sensitive, it was crucial to build the trust of citizens via strong, effective privacy and security protections. Citizens would have complete control over their data and would be able to add information, rectify errors, restrict access and find out which health professionals had accessed their data.

Industry and researchers would need a permit from their national health data access bodies to obtain anonymised data. And even then, only the data needed for a specific project would be provided, in a secure and controlled environment. In particular, attempting to re-identify people would not be permitted, and measures would be taken to this end.

In conclusion, Ms KYRIAKIDES explained that the European Health Data Space would profoundly change the daily reality of all patients in the EU by making them the true driving force behind the European Health Union. She invited the members of the College to communicate actively on the benefits expected from this proposal, so that European citizens could take control of an initiative which they themselves had called for in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the value of the European Health Data Space for every citizen, as it would provide full control over the use of the data;

- the precedent set by the initiative as the first common European data space in a specific sector, constituting a step forward in terms of the EU’s digital health policy;
- the value of this initiative as an example to inspire other parts of the world and to encourage the establishment of a transparent and protective health data framework, based on the strict standards and rules set by the EU;
- the importance of ensuring full protection of personal health data, including with regard to cybersecurity, and the significance of also providing for the ‘right to be forgotten’, allowing data to be erased at the request of the data subject;
- the immense potential resulting from making a considerable amount of data available to researchers, innovative companies and public authorities;
- the usefulness of the EU’s approach to the protection of personal data, which had now made it possible to encourage the sharing of sensitive health data within a regulatory framework protecting the rights of individuals;
- the control that citizens would be given over the use of their own health data, and the resulting accountability.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr SCHINAS and Ms KYRIAKIDES for their presentations and stressed the importance of that day’s proposals.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the Communication in COM(2022) 196/2 for transmission to Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Data Protection Supervisor, the European Data Protection Board and the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2022) 197/2 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the

Committee of the Regions, the European Data Protection Supervisor, the European Data Protection Board and the national parliaments, together with a staff working document, the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2022) 130, SWD(2022) 131, SWD(2022) 132 and SEC(2022) 196, the contents of which were noted.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The PRESIDENT provided an overview of the situation in Ukraine and, in this connection, referred to the proposed adoption of a sixth EU sanctions package targeting Russia.

She pointed out that, since 24 February 2022, the date on which Russia had launched its campaign of military aggression against Ukraine, the EU had responded to Russia's use of force by implementing five rounds of severe economic and financial sanctions. The approach taken was to target these measures in such a way as to deprive Russia of the resources needed to continue waging war, while at the same time limiting the collateral damage inflicted on the economy of the EU and that of its partners. She stated that the significant drop in Russia's gross domestic product – estimated by the Russian Central Bank to be between 8 and 10% – demonstrated the effectiveness of European and international sanctions.

She noted that the EU had decided to focus its sanctions on economic and financial aspects and that a new energy component would be added.

She explained that the proposed sixth package of restrictive measures would consist of three elements. The first would lead to a gradual reduction in imports of crude oil and petroleum products delivered from Russia into Member States. The second would consist of excluding Sberbank, which accounted for around one third of Russia's bank transactions, the Credit Bank of Moscow and the Russian

Agricultural Bank, as well as Belarus's second bank, from the Swift international payments system. The third would target three Russian State broadcasters, which disseminated the regime's propaganda and disinformation, as well as leading figures from the military-industrial complex.

The PRESIDENT spoke at greater length about the energy component of these sanctions, stressing that oil, just like coal, which had already been targeted by previous restrictive measures, was fungible and could easily be sold by Russia to buyers other than the European Union. The aim was to avoid the reduction in EU orders causing a surge in international oil prices, which would allow Russia to increase its revenues while at the same time inflict harm on the rest of the world.

The PRESIDENT underlined the need to maintain the unity of the 27 Member States around an even greater diversification of EU energy supply. She considered that Russia's halting of gas supplies to Poland and Bulgaria a few days earlier, in response to their refusal to pay in roubles, was an attempt to test EU unity, and she welcomed the solidarity shown by the other Member States on that occasion.

Ms SIMSON reported on the extraordinary Council of energy ministers that had taken place on 2 May. The participants had confirmed their refusal to pay for Russian energy supplies in roubles and their request to European companies not to reopen existing contracts, 97% of which provided for payments to be made in euros or dollars. She pointed out that the long-term contracts concluded by Poland and Bulgaria would expire in 2022 and noted that a new pipeline linking Lithuania to Poland would allow the latter to be supplied with liquefied natural gas. She added that the Commission had financed a gas pipeline starting in Norway that would shortly be put into operation.

Ms SIMSON underlined that the adoption of further sanctions had been mentioned during the meeting of the Council, which had wanted a ban on Russian oil imports staggered over several weeks to mitigate the effect on prices. She added that solutions had to be found for oil imported from other countries, such as Kazakhstan,

which transited through Russian ports. To conclude, she gave the example of Germany, which had reduced the proportion of Russian oil in its energy imports from 35% to 12% in just a few weeks.

Ms JOHANSSON reported on the current situation regarding Ukrainian refugees. A total of 5.3 million people fleeing the war had arrived in the EU, 1.3 million of whom had now returned to Ukraine. She noted that the number of arrivals was falling in the Member States bordering Ukraine, but emphasised that Ukrainian refugees currently made up 5% of Poland's population and 3% of the Czech Republic's population. She spoke about the challenges to be met in the host countries, in particular in terms of housing families and educating refugee children. She also highlighted the measures taken at the Commission's initiative to combat human trafficking and violence against women and to collect evidence of war crimes committed against Ukraine.

The PRESIDENT mentioned the funding made available at EU level to support Member States hosting refugees, in particular the package of EUR 17 billion available under the previous Multiannual Financial Framework. She announced that the Commission would henceforth publish a weekly table summarising the funding available and requested.

Ms FERREIRA referred to the conclusion of the negotiations held with the Member States on the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021 to 2027 with regard to cohesion policy. She noted that several Member States' operational programmes had been adopted and that the financing could be released at the end of the transition period.

She confirmed that EUR 17 billion from the previous Multiannual Financial Framework could be redeployed and used by the Member States by 2023 as part of the measures taken against the Russian military aggression in Ukraine.

She explained the precise conditions for reimbursement of the expenditure incurred by the Member States for the reception of Ukrainian refugees and pointed out that

the Commission had set up a one-stop shop to help them. She indicated that EUR 3.5 billion had been paid out in advance to Member States on the front line, notably from REACT-EU funds.

Ms FERREIRA concluded her presentation by mentioning the lack of reception infrastructure in certain regions of the EU and the need to pay attention to the emergence, in certain Member States, of arguments criticising the scale of the assistance that would be provided to refugees to the detriment of the citizens of those countries.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS praised the quality of the work carried out in preparation for the adoption of a sixth package of sanctions that went to the heart of Russian power, targeting energy on the one hand and propaganda channels on the other.

The EU was providing substantial support to Ukraine, in particular with the forthcoming disbursement of the second tranche of its macro-financial assistance of EUR 600 million, which could be followed by an additional tranche. The European Investment Bank was planning to grant a loan of EUR 1.5 billion, with guarantees from the EU budget. Ukraine's financing needs were estimated at EUR 5 billion per month in the short term; work should also begin on estimating the country's reconstruction needs, which would be considerable.

Ms VĂLEAN brought up the logistical difficulties that Ukraine was facing in its maritime transport infrastructure owing to the blocking of ports on the Black Sea. She referred to the options under consideration to address these issues in the short term. In the field of rail transport, work was under way to find solutions to the problem of the gauge difference between European and Ukrainian tracks.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the decisive impact that the sixth set of EU sanctions would have on the Russian economy and the financial means available to the country to continue its military

aggression in Ukraine; the increased isolation that this would bring about for Russia;

- the unknowns that Russia faced in this aggression in view of the strength of the Ukrainian resistance and the united response of the 27 Member States, in line with EU values;
- a question regarding the coordination of these new EU sanctions targeting Russian oil imports with its major international partners;
- support for the sanctions aimed at Russian disinformation networks;
- a reference to the energy situation in Poland and Bulgaria following the suspension of Russian gas supplies, used as a hybrid weapon, and the solutions to be put in place to tackle this;
- the attention to be paid, when implementing energy sanctions, to maintaining the solidarity of the Member States and to the attitude of European companies;
- the Commission's collaboration with the large business organisations in the Member States most exposed to Russian retaliation, in order to analyse the needs of European industry; the expediency of helping European industry to prepare itself, in particular by speeding up the reduction of the EU's dependence on Russian gas;
- the time and investment that would be required to enable the chemical industry in some Member States to adjust their production to use oil that was lighter than Russian crude oil;
- the significant number of refugees taken in in the EU in a very short space of time as a result of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine; the high degree of solidarity observed in the Member States but also the pressure placed on some of them on the front line;

- the support that these Member States needed, in particular in order to provide schooling and childcare for Ukrainian children;
- a suggestion that the possibility of revising the current Multiannual Financial Framework and establishing a special fund for refugees should be investigated; the desire to avoid reducing funding for local authorities as a result of the introduction of flexibility in cohesion policy funding to deal with expenditure related to the reception of Ukrainians fleeing the war; a reminder of the convergence and modernisation objectives to which the EU cohesion funds contributed, which should not be jeopardised;
- the need to respond to the concerns of the Member States’ governments regarding inflation and energy prices, alongside a reminder of the firm support given to Ukraine;
- a reminder that it was up to the Member States to decide on any revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework;
- a reference to the ongoing negotiations on the preparation of the EU budget for 2023; an indication that the Member States had already allocated 95% of the financing under the *NextGenerationEU* recovery plan;
- the suggestion that discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework should begin in 2024;
- the case for examining whether new flexibilities should be introduced, where appropriate, in the current temporary State aid mechanism in agriculture, fisheries and other sectors; the need to look into the scope for action in the field of public procurement as well.

The PRESIDENT returned to some of the points raised during the discussion.

She began by pointing out that there had been close coordination with the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada and the other major international

partners on all the packages of EU sanctions against Russia and that these countries were applying the same restrictive measures.

In general terms, it was difficult to find the right balance between such measures, aimed at reducing Russia's income, and the need to ensure that sanctions did not result in an upwards spiral in global prices. The EU was therefore pursuing a strategy of progressively and evenly reducing its dependence on Russian hydrocarbons in order to reduce the impact on the markets and therefore on prices. The option of capping energy prices had not been excluded at this stage, and the Commission was continuing to work on all possible scenarios.

With regard to the EU budget, she considered it unlikely that new allocations of 'fresh money' would increase the budget for 2023. As for the current Multiannual Financial Framework, financing was scheduled and flexibility had been put in place to support those Member States that were receiving Ukrainian refugees, as had been the case for the reception of Syrian refugees in 2015. The EUR 17 billion available came from the balance of the cohesion funds under the 2014 to 2020 Multiannual Financial Framework; this money would have been lost without this flexibility. She therefore strongly encouraged the Member States receiving the most refugees to make use of this shared financing, which reflected European solidarity.

To conclude, the PRESIDENT mentioned the substantial assistance that would be required to reconstruct Ukraine, in collaboration with the EU's international partners and international financial institutions.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 15.11.