



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2023) 2442 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Strasbourg, 14 February 2023

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2442nd meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 17 January 2023

(afternoon)

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Single sitting: Tuesday 17 January 2023 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.06 with Ms VESTAGER in the chair.

Present:

Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative/ Vice-President	Items 8 (in part) and 9
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms GABRIEL	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	Items 1 and 8 (in part)
Mr REYNDERS	Member	Items 8 (in part) and 9
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	Items 8 and 9 (in part)
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	

Absent:

Ms von der LEYEN	President
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President
Mr SCHMIT	Member
Mr GENTILONI	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member
Ms McGUINNESS	Member

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

Mr MES	Member of Mr TIMMERMANS's cabinet
Mr HULICIUS	Member of Ms JOUROVÁ's cabinet
Ms BERTULESSI	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Mr SCHMIT
Mr PIANTINI	Expert in Mr GENTILONI's cabinet
Ms PETSCH	Member of Mr VÁRHELYI's cabinet
Mr SAVIGNAT	Member of Ms URPILAINEN's cabinet
Ms O'HEA	Member of Ms McGUINNESS's cabinet

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

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2023) 2442/FINAL; SEC(2023) 2442/FINAL)

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

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF HEADS OF CABINET

(RCC(2023) 2442)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 16 January 2023.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2022) 2438; PV(2022) 2438, PART II)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2438th meeting of 22 November 2022 and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2439th, 2440th and 2441st meetings of 30 November, and 7 and 13 December 2022 until a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2023) 2)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 13 January 2023 (RCC(2023) 2).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Amendment of Directive 2003/87/EC as regards aviation's contribution to the Union's economy-wide emission reduction target and**

appropriately implementing a global market-based measure (Directive) – GLAVAK report – 2021/0207 (COD)

Line set out in SI(2023) 3/2.

- **General product safety – Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 1025/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repeal of Council Directive 87/357/EEC and Directive 2001/95/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council (Regulation) – CHARANZOVÁ report – 2021/0170 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 4.

- **Batteries and waste batteries, repeal of Directive 2006/66/EC and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 (Regulation) – BONAFÈ report – 2020/0353 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 1.

- **Oral question O-000052/2022 – ‘Investment practices of sustainable investment funds’**

Line set out in SP(2023) 4.

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points, for transmission to the European Parliament:

- **Commission replies to the legislative resolutions (and list of non-legislative resolutions without formal reply) adopted by the European Parliament at its part-session of December 2022**

Line set out in SP(2023) 10/2.

- **Commission replies to the non-legislative resolutions adopted by the European Parliament at its part-sessions of October I 2022, October II 2022 and November II 2022**

Line set out in SP(2023) 11/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Shipments of waste and amendment of Regulations (EU) No 1257/2013 and (EU) 2020/1056 (Regulation) – WEISS report – 2021/0367 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2023) 2.

- **Rules to prevent the misuse of shell entities for tax purposes and amendment of Directive 2011/16/EU (Council Directive) – PEREIRA report – 2021/0434 (CNS)**

Information set out in SP(2023) 3.

- **Capital Markets Union package:**
 - **Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 600/2014 as regards enhancing market data transparency, removing obstacles to the emergence of a consolidated tape, optimising the trading obligations and prohibiting receiving payments for forwarding client orders (Regulation) – HÜBNER report – 2021/0385 (COD)**
 - **Amendment of Directive 2014/65/EU on markets in financial instruments (Directive) – HÜBNER report – 2021/0384 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2023) 2.

- **Question Time (Commission) – ‘Food price inflation in Europe’**

Information set out in SP(2023) 14/2.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2022) 46; RCC(2023) 5; RCC(2023) 6)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2022) 46, RCC(2023) 5 and RCC(2023) 6 of the meetings of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 14 December 2022, and 4 and 11 January 2023.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2022) 426 ET SEQ.; SEC(2023) 60 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 12 December 2022 and 15 January 2023.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2022) 428 ET SEQ.; SEC(2023) 61 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 12 December 2022 and 15 January 2023.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2022) 429 ET SEQ.; SEC(2023) 62 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 12 December 2022 and 15 January 2023 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2023) 63)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 16 and 20 January 2023.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2023) 64)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2023) 1)

**7.1. DG TAXATION AND CUSTOMS UNION – TRANSFER OF AN AD14
OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms GABRIEL and Mr GENTILONI, the Commission decided to transfer, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Philippe DUPONTEIL, an AD14 official and currently Director of the ‘Support Services in Brussels’ Directorate at the Joint Research Centre, to the post of Director of the ‘Digital Delivery of Customs and Taxation Policies’ Directorate in DG Taxation and Customs Union.

This decision would take effect on 1 March 2023.

**7.2. DG MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES – AUTHORISATION OF
THE INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION, AT
GRADE AD14/15, AND EXTERNAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14,
OF A DIRECTOR POST**
(PERS(2023) 2)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr SINKEVIČIUS, the Commission decided to authorise the internal and interinstitutional publication, at grade AD14/15, and external publication, at grade AD14, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2023) 2 for the post of Director of the ‘International Ocean Governance & Sustainable

Fisheries' Directorate in DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations.

This decision would take effect immediately.

7.3. DG COMPETITION – AUTHORISATION TO RECRUIT A MEMBER OF THE TEMPORARY STAFF, UNDER ARTICLE 2(A) OF THE CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OF OTHER SERVANTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, AND EXTERNAL PUBLICATION OF A VACANCY NOTICE FOR A DIRECTOR POST AT GRADE AD14 (PERS(2023) 3)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms VESTAGER, the Commission decided:

- to authorise the recruitment of a member of the temporary staff at grade AD14, under Article 2(a) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union, with a view to filling the Director-level post of Chief Technology Officer in DG Competition, for a period of three years, renewable once for a maximum of two years;
- to authorise the external publication of the vacancy notice set out in PERS(2023) 3.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.4. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPRESENTATION

The Commission took note of the decision taken by the Appointing Authority to appoint Ms Annika WÄPPLING to the post of Head of the European Commission's Representation in Stockholm, Sweden.

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 – HARNESSING TALENT IN EUROPE’S REGIONS

(COM(2023) 32 TO/ 3; RCC(2023) 4)

Ms VESTAGER invited Ms ŠUICA, Ms FERREIRA and Ms GABRIEL to present to the College the Communication on harnessing talent in Europe by giving new impetus to the EU’s regions.

Ms ŠUICA began by stressing the importance of the demographic context of this Communication and the impact of demographic change on many European regions. She referred here to the second report on the consequences of demographic change published that day. This report revisited the demographic trends identified in the first report in 2020 in the light of recent developments, such as Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian aggression against Ukraine. It provided an assessment of whether or not the trends identified so far had been confirmed and, where they had not, to what extent any changes could be considered temporary or, on the contrary, likely to have a lasting impact on the demographic landscape of the Union. The conclusions of the report had thus served as a starting point for drafting the Communication presented to the College that day.

Ms ŠUICA then reminded the College that the original title of the Communication had explicitly referred to ‘brain drain’, a term that had also been used in the public consultation carried out before summer 2022 as part of the preparation of the Communication. The in-depth analysis of this particular problem had made it possible to identify the regions most affected – or at risk of being affected – by a loss of skilled labour that would seriously threaten their prosperity in the long term.

Ms ŠUICA explained that, as a result of the significant demographic transition the EU found itself in, some regions were facing a decrease in the number of skilled

workers and an insufficient number of higher education graduates. Unless action was taken, this transition would cause growing territorial disparities, as regions aged and fell behind in terms of the size and skills of their workforce. It was therefore vital to help regions that had fallen into a ‘talent development trap’ become more resilient and attractive, not only to maintain the EU’s competitiveness, but also to make sure no citizen or region was left behind.

That was why the Commission was launching the ‘talent booster mechanism’. This mechanism would support EU regions affected by the accelerated decline of their working-age population in training, retaining and attracting the people, skills and competencies needed to address the impact of the demographic transition.

Ms ŠUIČA added that the Communication and the proposed ‘talent booster mechanism’ marked the launch of the initiatives planned by the EU in the context of the European Year of Skills.

Ms FERREIRA then presented in more detail the main elements of the Communication, which was a response to demographic trends that were transforming Europe profoundly, in particular the ageing population and the fall in the birth rate. These developments required attention and urgent political action at EU level. The EU’s working-age population had already decreased by 3.5 million people between 2015 and 2020, and this decrease was expected to reach 35 million people by 2050.

Ms FERREIRA pointed out that some regions were more affected by these trends than others, and that huge disparities between European regions had been identified. The Communication therefore focused primarily on those regions that found themselves in a talent development trap or were at risk of falling into one. These were mainly regions suffering from an overall decline in their working population and a low proportion of people with higher education, as well as regions affected by an exodus of young people.

Ms FERREIRA noted that 82 regions in 16 Member States were particularly affected by a decline in the working-age population and a shortage of skilled labour.

These regions, which were home to 30% of the total EU population, were mostly less developed rural areas, remote and outermost regions or regions in industrial decline. Of these, 46 regions – home to 16% of the EU population – were already in a talent development trap, as they were experiencing an accelerated decline in their working population and a low proportion of people with higher education, while 36 regions – home to 13 % of the EU population – were at risk of falling into a talent development trap in the near future, as they were heavily affected by the exodus of part of their population aged 15-39.

On the basis of this analysis, she pointed out that the constraints and challenges facing these regions required the attention of local, regional, national and European authorities. She feared that, in the absence of a comprehensive strategy implemented at EU level, the trends identified could fuel what she termed a ‘geography of discontent’, in which the people most affected, who considered themselves left behind, might end up rejecting democratic principles in favour of a populist narrative.

Wondering what could be done to alleviate this situation, Ms FERREIRA stressed that there was no universal solution that would fit all cases and that a place-based approach should be followed, with targeted measures tailored to the specific realities of each region. She added that the regional plans drawn up under cohesion policy should form the basis for any response and subsequently be supplemented and enriched by complementary measures defined in the context of various EU policies. Ms FERREIRA also considered that these measures should focus on both demand and supply of talent in the regions.

In this regard, she noted that regions first and foremost had to create the economic opportunities and business-friendly environment that would make it possible to retain and attract a skilled workforce. To this end, they would have to strengthen their economies through innovation, working closely with key stakeholders in innovation ecosystems and diversifying their activities. She also stressed the importance of improving access to services, in particular as regards education, health and early childcare, in order to make regions more attractive to young and

skilled people. Lastly, she referred to the need to strengthen the governance of the regions and improve the performance of their public administrations, as these were essential factors for efficient public action and the attractiveness of regions for businesses and citizens.

She added that in order to boost the supply of talent, regions needed to develop their education and training systems, facilitate labour market integration, plan the investments needed for reskilling and upskilling, address labour shortages and ensure fair working conditions. Regions needed not only to focus on the return of lost workers, but also to be able to attract workers from other regions.

In order to reduce the constraints and address the challenges faced by these regions, the Communication proposed setting up a talent booster mechanism to support the two categories of regions identified by implementing eight specific actions, most of which would be launched this year.

Ms FERREIRA briefly described each of these actions, which would constitute the eight pillars of the talent booster mechanism:

- a pilot project to help regions facing a talent development trap draw up, consolidate, develop and implement tailored and comprehensive strategies, as well as identify relevant projects to train, attract and retain skilled workers;
- a new initiative, ‘Smart adaptation of regions to demographic transition’, to help regions experiencing higher rates of departure among young people adapt to the demographic transition and invest in talent development through tailored, place-based policies;
- continued support through the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) to encourage Member States to implement the reforms needed at national and regional level to address the shrinking of the working-age population and the skills deficit and to respond to local market needs;

- the mid-term review of the cohesion policy programmes to align funding with the proposed strategy and stimulate innovation and highly-skilled employment opportunities;
- a new call for innovative actions, launched under the ‘European Urban Initiative’ to test place-based solutions led by shrinking cities to develop, retain and attract skilled workers;
- highlighting EU initiatives supporting talent development on a dedicated web page: this would provide interested regions with easier access to information about EU policies in areas such as research and innovation, training, education, and youth mobility;
- the implementation of measures for the exchange of experiences and the dissemination of good practices: regions would have the opportunity to set up thematic and regional working groups to address specific professional or territorial challenges;
- the development of the analytical knowledge required to support and facilitate evidence-based policies on regional development and migration.

Ms GABRIEL was pleased that the Commission was starting the year with an initiative that celebrated the EU’s regions and sent an important message of solidarity. This demonstrated the EU’s commitment to leave no person or territory behind as regards economic development and competitiveness. She stressed that this initiative made it possible to bring together the EU’s policies and investment tools in its regions into a coherent whole.

She explained that the EU’s investment in people was focused on two areas: education and the emergence of strong economic ecosystems supported by research.

As regards education, Ms GABRIEL pointed out that the Commission had called for investment in primary, secondary and higher education in all regions of the EU, particularly in order to combat the emergence of knowledge deserts. At European

level, two flagship EU programmes, Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, had dedicated components for the development and use of knowledge at local level, through Erasmus+ Alliances for Innovation and Marie Skłodowska CURIE research fellowships.

As regards the emergence of centres of excellence in the regions most in need, she pointed out that the Horizon Europe programme offered many tools, including a component dedicated to the least developed territories in the field of research and innovation, together with partnerships for regional innovation, as well as the ‘hydrogen valleys’ and the 100 ‘innovation valleys’ promoted through the New European Innovation Agenda.

She noted that the Deep Tech Talent Initiative, launched in July with the New European Innovation Agenda, was another example of the EU’s commitment to train one million workers by the end of 2024 in all parts of Europe in order to fill the knowledge gap in the technology sectors of the future. Finally, she cited the example of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) programme on regional innovation that brought together local actors from business, research and the education community.

Ms GABRIEL concluded her presentation by stressing that while the EU was already doing a lot for its regions, the proposed initiative offered new avenues for action, and a report on the progress made would have to be provided before the end of the current Commission’s term of office.

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

- the comprehensive approach being implemented through the Communication, which was a very timely way to launch the European Year of Skills, of which it was a flagship initiative;
- the importance of reducing economic and social disparities between the different regions of Europe and ensuring that everyone was included in the EU’s

programmes and strategies to develop talent and skills;

- the advisability of pursuing the various cross-cutting strategies under the Union of Equality initiative, in particular with a view to promoting equal opportunities as regards education, employment and access to services, which were fundamental aspects for creating an attractive environment in the regions where the need was greatest;
- the untapped potential of the 7 million skilled women who were absent from the EU labour market due to caring responsibilities;
- the need to consider each sector of the economy in order to promote economic inclusion of the most vulnerable groups, such as the Roma, people with disabilities or sexual minorities, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination with regard to accessing knowledge and vocational training;
- the cross-cutting dimension of skills development, which related to all EU policies and needed to be viewed in the context of the far-reaching green and digital transformation of the economy and society;
- the need to include a strong regional dimension in skills development, as development gaps were more of a concern in certain regions, in particular peripheral regions, than they were in urban areas.

Ms ŠUIČA highlighted the fact that the principle of cohesion was central to the proposed strategy. The EU's cohesion policy would continue to help the most affected regions to foster innovation and develop opportunities for highly skilled jobs, thereby increasing the likelihood of attracting talented people to those regions and keeping them there.

She also called for demographic considerations to be systematically taken into account in the design and implementation of policies in the EU at a time when it was undergoing a major demographic transition. Otherwise, that transition would, in her view, trigger new and widening geographical disparities as regional populations

aged, leaving those regions lagging behind in terms of the size and skill level of their workforce.

Ms VESTAGER concluded the discussion by pointing out that, when it came to investment in skills, the return was much lower in disadvantaged regions and that those regions should therefore be supported, in particular by facilitating the granting of subsidies. Lastly, she too stressed the importance of ensuring that the principle of cohesion, which was a fundamental value of the EU, remained central to the EU's rationale when taking policy decisions.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2023) 32/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Ms VESTAGER then gave the floor to Mr BORRELL for an update on the latest developments in the EU's external relations.

Regarding the latest developments in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, Mr BORRELL deplored the Russian missile strike on a building in Dnipro on Saturday 14 January in which many people had lost their lives, making it one of the deadliest attacks of the war. Some of the victims of the strike were children. A recent wave of Russian strikes had also destroyed Ukrainian utilities infrastructure, leading to power cuts in many regions.

He drew the College's attention to the ongoing political debate on the amount and type of support that the EU was giving Ukraine. In addition to the financial support provided directly by the Member States and EU support through the European Peace Facility, Ukraine's requests related to military equipment, and in particular battle

tanks. Discussions would continue at the upcoming meetings of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group in Ramstein and at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, the main objective being to prevent the war from becoming a drawn-out process of destruction.

Mr BORRELL also noted that Belarus had begun air force drills with Russia. This had come following a major reshuffle of the army leadership in Russia the previous week, with the Chief of the General Staff, Valery GERASIMOV, being appointed commander of operations in Ukraine. The changes to Russia's military structure suggested that Russia was preparing to take its aggression to a new level and that a major offensive could take place in the spring.

He also informed the College that, on 14 January, Iran had executed Alireza AKBARI, a dual UK-Iranian national and the former Iranian Deputy Minister of Defence. The crackdown witnessed thus far in Iran had targeted civilians and those defending human rights; in his view, this execution was evidence that the crackdown had now reached the inner circle of power.

He then referred to the recent riots in Peru, in which more than 50 people had been shot dead. The upcoming summit of Latin American countries, which would also be attended by high-level EU representatives, could provide an opportunity to discuss these issues.

Lastly, Mr BORRELL said that a debate was taking place that very day in the UN Security Council on the rule of law and how to deal with global conflicts. He referred to the speech given at that meeting by the UN Secretary-General, António GUTERRES, on promoting and strengthening the rule of law as a means of maintaining international peace and security.

At the invitation of Ms VESTAGER, Ms FERREIRA then took the floor briefly to inform the College that she had attended the inauguration ceremony for the new Brazilian President, Mr LULA DA SILVA, which took place on 1 January 2023. She highlighted the willingness expressed by the Brazilian President to protect the Amazon rainforest and to develop trade cooperation, in particular under the

EU-Mercosur agreement; both issues were political priorities for the EU.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 14.00.