



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2023) 2452 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 17 May 2023

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2452nd meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 29 March 2023

(morning)

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PV(2023) 2452 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Wednesday 29 March 2023 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.05 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	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
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 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	Items 8 and 9
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	Items 8 and 9 (in part)
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	Items 8 and 9
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

Absent:

Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President
Ms FERREIRA	Member

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

Ms CANENBLEY	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Ms VESTAGER	Item 9 (in part)
Mr SOBRAL	Head of Cabinet to Ms FERREIRA	Item 9 (in part)

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT
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 cabinet
Mr FLOSDORFF	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms HILI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General
Ms BUKA	Secretariat-General

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2023) 2452/FINAL; SEC(2023) 2452/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) 2452)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 27 March 2023.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2023) 2448)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2448th meeting of 1 March 2023 and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2449th, 2450th and 2451st meetings of 8, 14/16 and 22 March 2023 until a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2023) 86)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 24 March 2023 (RCC(2023) 86).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/631 as regards strengthening the CO₂ emission performance standards for new passenger**

cars and new light commercial vehicles in line with the Union's increased climate ambition (Regulation) – HUITEMA report – 2021/0197 (COD)

Line set out in SI(2023) 91.

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Amendment of Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Directive 98/70/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, and repeal of Council Directive (EU) 2015/652 (Directive) – PIEPER report – 2021/0218 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 73/2.

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure, and repeal of Directive 2014/94/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (Regulation) – ERTUG report – 2021/0223 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 74.

- **Data Act – Harmonised rules on fair access to and use of data (Regulation) – DEL CASTILLO VERA report – 2022/0047 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 75/3.

- **Establishment of a framework of measures for strengthening Europe's semiconductor ecosystem (Chips Act) (Regulation) – NICA report – 2022/0032 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 79/2.

- **Revision of the mandate of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (Regulation) – SANTOS report – 2022/0009 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 76.

- **Transparency and targeting of political advertising (Regulation) – GOZI report – 2021/0381 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 78/2.

- **Amendment of Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EC) No 810/2009 and (EU) 2017/2226 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Council Regulations (EC) No 1683/95, (EC) No 333/2002, (EC) No 693/2003 and (EC) No 694/2003 and Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement, as regards the digitalisation of the visa procedure (Regulation) – NEMEC report – 2022/0132 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 77/2.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2023/194 of 30 January 2023 fixing for 2023 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks, applicable in Union waters, for Union fishing vessels, in certain non-Union waters, as well as fixing for 2023 and 2024 such fishing opportunities for certain deep-sea fish stocks (Council Regulation) – 2023/0061 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 81.

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

- **Follow-up to opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee – Plenary session of December 2022**

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

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Greenhouse gases and ozone-depleting substances:**

- **Fluorinated greenhouse gases: Amendment of Directive (EU) 2019/1937 and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 517/2014 (Regulation) – EICKHOUT report – 2022/0099 (COD)**
- **Substances that deplete the ozone layer and repeal of Regulation (EC) No 1005/2009 (Regulation) – POLFJÄRD report – 2022/0100 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2023) 165 and SP(2023) 166.

- **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)**

Compromise text in SP(2022) 167, further to note SI(2022) 490/2, which the Commission had already approved on 13 December 2022.

- **Strengthening the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (Directive) – RAFAELA & PETER-HANSEN report – 2021/0050 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 168, further to note SI(2022) 517, which the Commission had already approved on 21 December 2022 by written procedure.

- **Establishment of a collaboration platform to support the functioning of Joint Investigation Teams and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2018/1726 (Regulation) – AZMANI report – 2021/0391 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 170, further to note SI(2022) 518, which the Commission had already approved on 21 December 2022 by written procedure.

- **European Year of Skills 2023 (Decision) – FOURLAS report –**

2022/0326 (COD)

Compromise text in SP(2023) 171, further to note SI(2023) 57, which the Commission had already approved on 14 March 2023.

- **Amendment of Directive (EU) 2019/1153 of the European Parliament and of the Council, as regards access of competent authorities to centralised bank account registries through the single access point (Directive) – RADEV report – 2021/0244 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2023) 86/2.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2023) 16)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2023) 16 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 22 March 2023.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2023) 130 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 20 and 26 March 2023.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2023) 131 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 20 and 26 March 2023.

6.3. *DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS*
(SEC(2023) 132 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 20 and 26 March 2023 archived in Decide.

6.4. *SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES*
(SEC(2023) 133 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 27 and 31 March 2023.

7. *ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS*
(SEC(2023) 134 AND /2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2023) 32 AND /2)

7.1. *DG INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART AND TRANSFER OF AN AD16 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS*

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

- to create a temporary post of adviser *hors classe* in DG International Partnerships; this post would be abolished upon the departure of the job-holder;

- to transfer to this new post, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Henrik HOLOLEI, currently Director-General of DG Mobility and Transport.

These decisions would take effect on 1 April 2023.

7.2. DG EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN AID OPERATIONS – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15 (PERS(2022) 16 TO /4)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), (1)(b) and (2) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Disaster Preparedness and Prevention’ Directorate (ECHO.B) in DG European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (PERS(2022) 16 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 20 December 2022 and 23 February 2023 (PERS(2022) 16/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants’ qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr LENARČIČ, it then decided to appoint Ms Hanna JAHNS to the post.

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

7.3. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15 (PERS(2022) 49 TO /4)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), (1)(b) and (2) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Workplace and Wellbeing’ Directorate (HR.D) in DG Human Resources and Security (PERS(2022) 49 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 20 and 26 January 2023 (PERS(2022) 49/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Ms Susan PANTER-DUNCAN to the post.

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

**7.4. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – APPOINTMENT OF A
PRINCIPAL ADVISER AT GRADE AD14
(PERS(2023) 33 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 2 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union for the post of Principal Adviser, 'President of the Board of the European Innovation Council – EIC' (RTD.PA.01) in DG Research and Innovation (PERS(2023) 33).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 28 September 2022 and 17 November 2022 (PERS(2023) 33/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms GABRIEL, it then decided to appoint Mr Michiel SCHEFFER to the post as a member of the temporary staff under Article 2 of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union for an initial period of 4 years.

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

**7.5. JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE – AMENDMENT OF THE
ORGANISATION CHART AND 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, the Commission decided:

- to approve the creation of a temporary post of Principal Adviser for Research Policy and Standardisation, placed under the authority of the Deputy Director-General in charge of Directorates B, C, D, E and F in the Joint Research Centre (JRC); this post would be abolished upon the departure of the future jobholder;
- to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Krzysztof MARUSZEWSKI, currently Director of the ‘Digital Transformation and Data’ Directorate (JRC.T) in the Joint Research Centre, to the newly created post.

These decisions would take effect on 1 May 2023.

8. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING DIRECTIVES 2009/102/EC AND (EU) 2017/1132 AS REGARDS FURTHER EXPANDING AND UPGRADING THE USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS AND PROCESSES IN COMPANY LAW (COM(2023) 177 AND /2; SWD(2023) 177; SWD(2023) 178; SWD(2023) 179; SEC(2023) 377; RCC(2023) 90)

Ms JOUROVÁ presented the proposal for a Directive on company law, which was intended to help businesses benefit fully from the development of the internal market and economic growth in the European Union. This targeted proposal was based on a more general Directive on the digitalisation of company law adopted in 2019, which had made it possible to set up a company entirely online in the European Union.

The new proposal was in line with the Commission’s 2021 target, set out in its communication on the Digital Compass for 2030, of having certain key public

services 100% available online for the benefit of citizens and businesses. The proposal also met the target of assisting small and medium-sized enterprises to operate in the EU, in particular by helping them to achieve cross-border growth.

Ms JOUROVÁ pointed out that the proposed measures would take effect at various levels to improve the day-to-day operation of businesses. Firstly, they would improve business transparency and trust in businesses, by giving the public wider access to their data and by ensuring that it was reliable, accurate and available in business registers. This data could then also be used by Member States and businesses in a cross-border context.

The proposed measures would also enable businesses to benefit from more digitalised and better connected cross-border public services, so that they could avoid having to send the same information multiple times when, for example, they wanted to set up subsidiaries in other Member States. Finally, these measures would have a positive impact on reducing the administrative burden for businesses operating across borders, specifically targeting small and medium-sized enterprises.

Ms JOUROVÁ illustrated this last point by referring to a key element of the proposal: the abolition of the apostille. Although the apostille had been abolished several years previously as regards the certification of personal documents in a cross-border context, it was now necessary to abolish it also for company documents.

She concluded her presentation by underlining that the simplifications and efficiency gains contained in the proposal would help to boost growth and competitiveness in the single market. She therefore felt that the proposal was both timely and in line with the communications recently approved by the Commission on the single market and the long-term competitiveness of the EU.

Mr REYNDERS pointed out that the proposal was intended to make life easier for businesses, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises, and for all business professionals working in a cross-border context in which data was not always

available or sufficiently reliable.

Important business data would be made public at EU level through the Business Registers Interconnection System (BRIS), which would enable reliable information to be exchanged via national registers in the Member States. In particular, he focused on connecting BRIS with other available registers, for example beneficial ownership or insolvency registers.

The proposed measures would help to reduce red tape, by requiring only what was necessary and only requiring it once, by creating multilingual certificates containing essential information on cross-border businesses and by abolishing the requirement for an apostille for documents from national commercial registers or notarial offices.

Finally, he welcomed the fact that the proposed measures, which concerned approximately 16 million limited liability companies, were beneficial for the small and medium-sized enterprises that accounted for almost 98% of those limited liability companies, of which 40% were engaged in cross-border activities.

Mr REYNDERS concluded his presentation by stressing that the proposal contained no reporting requirement and that it would have a positive impact on businesses and cross-border trade, services and investment, and therefore on growth and competitiveness in the internal market.

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

- the growing interest in making good use of new technologies and digital data;
- the importance of real and tangible simplification, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, without any new obligations;
- the wish that the proposal be swiftly adopted by the co-legislators and that Member States promote the development of digital literacy among businesses.

Following these presentations, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Directive in COM(2023) 177/2, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments, together with the staff working documents and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2023) 177, SWD(2023) 178, SWD(2023) 179 and SEC(2023) 377, the contents of which were noted.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1. RESULTS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL (BRUSSELS, 23 AND 24 MARCH 2023)

The PRESIDENT informed the College of the main results of the European Council which had taken place on 23 and 24 March. She underlined the quality and consensual nature of the discussions by the Heads of State or Government on complex issues.

The meeting had started with a speech by UN Secretary-General António GUTERRES, which focused on two topics: (i) the Black Sea grain initiative and (ii) the report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In relation to the first topic, the PRESIDENT stressed the success of this UN initiative and of the European Solidarity Lanes which, by facilitating the export of Ukrainian cereals, had lowered cereal prices on world markets.

The IPCC report stated that efforts at world level to combat global warming were lagging behind, but that the EU had exceeded its targets: global CO₂ emissions had increased by 1% in the previous year, while they had fallen by 2.5% in Europe. It was clear that the EU's investments in renewable energy generation and energy-saving measures had borne fruit. However, the EU

needed to step up its efforts with the rest of the world in order to achieve the climate targets at global level.

The PRESIDENT then turned to the speech by Ukrainian President Volodymyr ZELENSKYY, which had mainly concerned the military assistance that Ukraine hoped to receive from the EU, including the delivery of ammunition. The war crimes committed by Russia in Ukraine had also been broached during these discussions. She deplored the cruelty and brutality of these crimes, in particular the abduction of more than 16 000 Ukrainian children, who had been deported to Russia. At this stage only around 300 children had been able to return to Ukraine. Follow-up and repatriation operations, supported by the EU, were ongoing.

The PRESIDENT said that EU competitiveness had also been discussed in depth at the European Council. The Heads of State or Government had congratulated the Commission warmly on its legislative proposals in response to the US Inflation Reduction Act, in particular the Regulations on a Net Zero Industry Act and on a Critical Raw Materials Act. The debate had addressed in particular the development of skills and the need for skilled labour by companies in the sectors covered by the proposed legislation, as well as the finalisation of the international trade agreements that the EU was currently negotiating with several partner countries. The European Council conclusions were in line with the Commission's proposals, and sent a robust message to industry.

The last major topic discussed by the European Council had been migration. The PRESIDENT said that the European leaders had expressed satisfaction with the Commission's structured approach on this matter. However, they had been concerned about the increase in the number of migrants stranded in Tunisia and Libya, with estimates ranging from 600 000 to 900 000 people. The priority in the coming weeks was to conclude an agreement with the Libyan and Tunisian authorities to increase surveillance by means of special

joint actions in the territorial waters of these countries and in international waters.

The PRESIDENT ended her presentation of the outcome of the European Council by referring to one specific subject raised during the discussion on competitiveness, namely relations with China. She informed the College that she would be going on an official visit to China with French President Emmanuel MACRON at the beginning of April as part of the Team Europe approach. In preparation for this visit, she would deliver a speech on 30 March on EU-China relations. In this speech, she would push for a more nuanced European policy on China, opting for risk reduction rather than disengagement. She would also stress the importance for the EU of actively communicating not only with China, but also with China's main regional partners, namely Japan, Australia and India.

The Commission took note of this information.

9.2. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED KINGDOM

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ reported on the latest developments in the EU's relations with the United Kingdom since the political agreement on the Windsor Framework announced on 27 February by the PRESIDENT and British Prime Minister Rishi SUNAK.

The agreement in principle had since been approved unanimously by the General Affairs Council on the EU side, and the House of Commons had recently voted in favour of the 'Stormont brake' emergency mechanism, which was a key part of the agreement. Thanks to this progress, the EU-UK Joint Committee and Partnership Council had been able to meet on Friday 24 March to adopt a series of decisions, recommendations and statements setting out the arrangements for implementing the Windsor Framework, which was an important first step in the process.

As a second step, in line with its commitments to Britain and Northern Ireland, the EU would have to adopt legislative proposals on sanitary and phytosanitary products, medicines and tariff quotas for certain categories of steel. As the legislation had to be adopted before summer, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ referred to his constructive discussions with the European Parliament in the Conference of Presidents on possible use of the urgency procedure for that purpose.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ also welcomed the agreement's key contribution to resolving outstanding issues with the UK and implementing the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. The text of the agreement allowed the concerns that had arisen over the previous two years to be addressed definitively, while respecting the legitimate interests of the EU and the UK.

In particular, the concerns that the protocol had caused among politicians, citizens and businesses in Northern Ireland had been taken into account, with new provisions on agri-food, medicines, customs, VAT and excise duties, State aid, tariff quotas and governance. The key principle underpinning the framework was that the EU's introduction of facilitations depended on the UK side putting in place appropriate safeguards. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ pointed out that if those safeguards were not applied properly or did not work, the facilitations could also be suspended.

As regards the role of the European Court of Justice, which was of paramount importance to the Union, the Court remained the sole arbiter of EU law. However, there was a strong political will on both sides to jointly resolve any future difficulties before they turned into legal disputes.

In that regard, the British Government had publicly committed to stopping the Northern Ireland Protocol bill from proceeding further. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stressed that the same constructive spirit of cooperation would be needed to

work closely with the UK on implementing the framework in the months and years to come.

Once the issues around the protocol had been conclusively resolved, he expected relations with the UK to get back to normal. He highlighted three guiding principles for those future relations:

- i) the EU's interests would have to be considered in all areas of cooperation;
- ii) the rights and obligations set out in the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) would be the cornerstone of future cooperation with the UK, the potential of which should be fully exploited while avoiding proposals for new activities that fell outside the scope of the agreement;
- iii) cooperation and unity within the EU would be essential to maintain an overview and good overall balance, especially through the existing coordination units for relations with the UK in the Commission, Council and Parliament.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ pointed out that the meeting of the TCA Partnership Council, held in the margins of the Joint Committee on 24 March, had been a first opportunity to advance implementation of the TCA in many areas. The agenda had focused on possible developments in energy and security cooperation, as well as the UK's associate membership of EU programmes.

He noted that the European Parliament would be holding a ceremony on 29 March to commemorate the anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement on 10 April. He highlighted the EU's vital contribution to protecting the hard-earned gains of the peace process on the island of Ireland, and the close contacts with stakeholders in Northern Ireland throughout the discussions on the Windsor Framework. He believed that, after 25 years focused on peace, the next 25

years of the Belfast Agreement would aim to ensure prosperity on the island of Ireland. In that context, the framework would benefit the people of Northern Ireland, in particular through access to the European single market and various EU programmes.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission praised the tireless work of Mr ŠEFČOVIČ and the departments concerned, and raised the following points:

- the EU's role in the peace process on the island of Ireland, and the importance of closely monitoring future security developments;
- the impact of Brexit on the UK's access to EU programmes.

The PRESIDENT stressed that, with regard to the Horizon Europe programme, the door was wide open on the European side to start work immediately on an association agreement with the UK. She therefore asked the Commissioners concerned to encourage the UK side to move forward on the agreement in order to remove any obstacles to British researchers, universities and scientists taking part in the programme.

The Commission took note of this information.

9.3. AGREEMENT ON CO₂ EMISSION STANDARDS FOR CARS AND LIGHT COMMERCIAL VEHICLES

At the request of the PRESIDENT, Mr TIMMERMANS informed the College of the latest developments concerning the interinstitutional agreement on CO₂ emission performance standards for new cars and vans.

He pointed out that, in June 2022, the Council has requested the inclusion of a recital stating that the Commission would put forward a proposal to allow new vehicles running exclusively on CO₂-neutral fuels to continue to be registered after 2035. That recital had been incorporated into the text agreed

between the European Parliament and the Council during the subsequent interinstitutional negotiations.

During the final adoption stage, the Commission had been invited by the Council to make a statement clarifying how it saw the recital being implemented. Mr TIMMERMANS said that it would be necessary to create, before summer, a new category in the ‘type-approval’ system for vehicles which could run only on synthetic fuel. That new category of vehicles would then be added, in autumn, to the current proposal by means of a delegated act to show how the cars concerned could contribute to CO₂ reduction targets.

Mr TIMMERMANS concluded by stressing that the Commission’s statement was thus fully in line with the agreement reached with negotiators in the European Parliament and the Council.

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

- appreciation for Mr TIMMERMANS’s considerable work on the matter and for the unity shown by the Commission;
- the importance of maintaining technological neutrality to give free rein to developments in scientific research and innovation;
- the case for addressing the concerns raised by the Euro7 emission standards.

In response to the points raised during the discussion, Mr TIMMERMANS considered that the Euro 7 standards should refer to parts common to all cars, such as tyres and brakes, rather than combustion engines.

The PRESIDENT confirmed that the Commission’s approach had to remain technologically neutral. The proposal did not advocate banning the combustion engine but called for zero emissions from exhausts, irrespective

of the technology used to achieve that. In that context, she stressed the importance of clear and reasoned communication.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The Commission's other discussions on certain agenda items are recorded in the special minutes.

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The meeting closed at 11.04.