



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2023) 2465 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 17 October 2023

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2465th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 6 September 2023

(morning)

PV(2023) 2465 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Wednesday 6 September 2023 (morning)

The sitting opened at 10.40 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 11.3
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	Items 1 to 11.3
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	Items 1 to 11.2
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	Items 1 to 11.3 (in part)
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

Absent:

Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
Mr REYNDERS	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member

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

Ms TUTS	Head of Cabinet to Mr REYNDERS
Ms TEEDUMÄE	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Mr VÁRHELYI

The following also sat in:

Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission
Ms CABRAL	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General

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

The PRESIDENT opened the meeting by mentioning the recent changes in the organisation of responsibilities of the Members of the Commission (see also Item 8 of these minutes).

Mr TIMMERMANS had submitted his resignation as a Member of the European Commission on 22 August in order to stand in the upcoming general elections in the Netherlands and the PRESIDENT had decided to entrust the role of Executive Vice-President in charge of the European Green Deal to Mr ŠEFČOVIČ. She had also decided to temporarily assign to him responsibility for climate action policy, until the new Dutch Member of the Commission was appointed.

The PRESIDENT also informed the College that Ms VESTAGER was temporarily withdrawing from the work of the Commission, from the evening of 5 September, following her nomination as the official candidate of the Danish Government for the post of President of the Management Committee of the European Investment Bank. For the duration of the withdrawal, Ms JOUROVÁ would be responsible for steering and coordinating the policy area ‘A Europe Fit for the Digital Age’ and Mr REYNDEERS would be responsible for Competition Policy, reporting directly to the PRESIDENT. Mr SCHINAS would take over the Innovation and Research portfolio until the new Bulgarian Member of the Commission was appointed.

* * *

1. AGENDA

(OJ(2023) 2465/FINAL)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF HEADS OF CABINET

(RCC(2023) 2465/2)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 4 September 2023.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2023) 2460; PV(2023) 2460, 2ND PART; PV(2023) 2461; PV(2023) 2461, 2ND PART; PV(2023) 2462; PV(2023) 2462, 2ND PART; PV(2023) 2463; PV(2023) 2464)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2460th, 2461st, 2462nd, 2463rd and 2464th meetings of 13, 20 and 28 June, and 5 and 11 July 2023.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2023) 149)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group held on Friday 1 September (RCC(2023) 149).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Amendment of Directives 2011/61/EU and 2009/65/EC as regards delegation arrangements, liquidity risk management, supervisory reporting, provision of depositary and custody services and loan origination by alternative investment funds (Directive) – BENJUMEA BENJUMEA report – 2021/0376 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 327.

- **Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence and amendment of Directive (EU) 2019/1937 (Directive) – WOLTERS report – 2022/0051 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 328/2.

- **Establishment of a Single Market emergency instrument and repeal of Council Regulation (EC) No 2679/98 (Regulation) – SCHWAB report – 2022/0278 (COD) / Amendment of Regulations (EU) 2016/424, (EU) 2016/425, (EU) 2016/426, (EU) 2019/1009 and (EU) No 305/2011 as regards emergency procedures for the conformity assessment, adoption of common specifications and market surveillance due to a Single Market emergency (Regulation) – SCHWAB report – 2022/0279 (COD) / Amendment of Directives 2000/14/EC, 2006/42/EC, 2010/35/EU, 2013/29/EU, 2014/28/EU, 2014/29/EU, 2014/30/EU, 2014/31/EU, 2014/32/EU, 2014/33/EU, 2014/34/EU, 2014/35/EU, 2014/53/EU and 2014/68/EU as regards emergency procedures for the conformity assessment, adoption of common specifications and market surveillance due to a Single Market emergency (Directive) – SCHWAB report – 2022/0280 (COD)**

Line set out in SP(2023) 406.

- **Joint Proposal for a Council Regulation concerning restrictive measures in view of Iran's military support of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine – 2023/0276 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 314.

- **Joint proposal for a Council Regulation amending restrictive measures in view of the situation in Haiti – 2023/0277 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 320.

The Commission approved the line proposed for the following point, for transmission to the European Parliament:

- **Commission replies to the non-legislative resolutions adopted by the European Parliament at its May I, May II and June 2023 part-sessions**

Line set out in SP(2023) 412/3.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Establishment of a multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, amendment of Regulations (EC) No 1936/2001, (EU) 2017/2107, and (EU) 2019/833 and repeal of Regulation (EU) 2016/1627 (Regulation) – AGUILERA report – 2019/0272 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 368, further to note COM(2023) 358, which the Commission had already approved on 29 June 2023.

- **Amendment of Directive 2000/60/EC establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy, Directive 2006/118/EC on the protection of groundwater against pollution and deterioration and Directive 2008/105/EC on environmental quality standards in the field of water policy (Directive) – BRGLEZ report – 2022/0344 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2023) 402.

- **Ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe (Directive – recast) – LÓPEZ report – 2022/0347 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2023) 403/2.

- **Standards of quality and safety for substances of human origin intended for human application and repeal of Directives 2002/98/EC and 2004/23/EC (Regulation) – COLIN-OESTERLÉ report – 2022/0216 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2023) 410.

- **Geographical indication protection for craft and industrial products and amendment of Regulations (EU) 2017/1001 and (EU) 2019/1753 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Decision (EU) 2019/1754 (Regulation) – WALSMANN report – 2022/0115 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 405, further to note SI(2023) 139 already approved by the Commission on 8 May 2023 by written procedure.

- **Establishment of the European defence industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act (Regulation) – KRASNODEBSKI & GAHLER report – 2022/0219 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 401, further to note SI(2023) 271, which the Commission had already approved on 5 July 2023.

- **Consumer credits (Directive) – KONEČNÁ report – 2021/0171 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 404, further to note SI(2023) 115, which the Commission had already approved on 26 April 2023.

- **‘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)

Compromise text in SP(2023) 407, further to notes SI(2023) 101/2, SI(2023) 221 and SI(2023) 258, which the Commission had already approved on 18 April, 13 June and 28 June 2023.

- **‘Fit for 55’: Ensuring a level playing field for sustainable air transport (Regulation) – BAUZÁ DÍAZ report – 2021/0205 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 408, further to note SI(2023) 112 already approved by the Commission on 8 May 2023 by written procedure.

- **Labelling of organic pet food (Regulation) – HÄUSLING report – 2022/0390 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 409, further to note SI(2023) 233, which the Commission had already approved on 20 June 2023.

- **Amendment of Council Regulation (EC) No 6/2002 on Community designs and repeal of Commission Regulation (EC) No 2246/2002 (Regulation) – LEBRETON report – 2022/0391 (COD) / Legal protection of designs (Directive – recast) – LEBRETON report – 2022/0392 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2023) 329.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2023) 29)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2023) 29 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 30 August 2023.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2023) 274 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 10 July and 3 September 2023.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2023) 275 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 10 July and 3 September 2023.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2023) 276 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 10 July and 3 September 2023 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2023) 277 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 4 and 8 September 2023.

6.5. GRANTING OF AN EMPOWERMENT AND A DELEGATION OF POWERS – COMMISSION DECISION GRANTING AN EMPOWERMENT AND A DELEGATION OF POWERS RELATING TO THE ADOPTION OF MEASURES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF

THE FINANCIAL REGULATION

(C(2023) 4867)

The Commission decided:

- to empower the Member of the Commission with responsibility for the budget to adopt measures for the implementation of the Financial Regulation, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, subject to the conditions laid down in Article 2 and Articles 4 to 7 of the Decision;
- to grant a delegation of powers to the Director-General of DG Budget to adopt measures for the implementation of the Financial Regulation, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, subject to the conditions laid down in Articles 4 to 7 of the Decision.

The Commission adopted the Decision in C(2023) 4867.

**6.6. GRANTING OF AN EMPOWERMENT – COMMISSION DECISION
GRANTING AN EMPOWERMENT RELATING TO CERTAIN
MEASURES TO BE TAKEN UNDER REGULATION (EU) 2022/2065 OF
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON A
SINGLE MARKET FOR DIGITAL SERVICES AND COMMISSION
IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EU) 2023/1201 ON DETAILED
ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE CONDUCT OF CERTAIN
PROCEEDINGS BY THE COMMISSION PURSUANT TO
REGULATION (EU) 2022/2065
(C(2023) 6058)**

The Commission decided to empower the Member of the Commission with responsibility for communications networks, content and technology to adopt certain measures relating to a Single Market for Digital Services, on behalf of

the Commission and under its responsibility, subject to the conditions laid down in Articles 4 to 6 of the Decision.

The Commission adopted the Decision in C(2023) 6058.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2023) 278 AND /2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2023) 74 AND /2)

7.1. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – APPOINTMENT OF A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT GRADE AD15/16

(PERS(2023) 12 TO /4)

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 ‘International Dimension of Justice Policies, Rule of Law and Equality’ in DG Justice and Consumers (PERS(2023) 12 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 14 April and 26 May 2023 (PERS(2023) 12/3 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 REYNDERS and Ms DALLI, it then decided to appoint Ms Irena MOOZOVA to the post.

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

7.2. DG AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15

(PERS(2023) 75 TO /3)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Resources’ Directorate in DG Agriculture and Rural Development (PERS(2023) 75).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 28 and 29 June 2023 (PERS(2023) 75/2 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 Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI, it then decided to appoint Ms Carmen Rosa NARANJO SANCHEZ to the post.

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

**7.3. DG TRADE – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2023) 73 TO /4)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Resources, Inter-Institutional Relations and Communications and Civil Society’ Directorate in DG Trade (PERS(2023) 73 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 5 and 6 June 2023 (PERS(2023) 73/3 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 DOMBROVSKIS, it then decided to appoint Ms Sofia MUNOZ ALBARRAN to the post.

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

**7.4. DG BUDGET – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2023) 19 TO /4)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Expenditure’ Directorate in DG Budget (PERS(2023) 19 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 14 July 2023 (PERS(2023) 19/3 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 Lenka FILIPKOVA to the post.

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

**7.5. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR
AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2023) 76 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Consumers’ Directorate in DG Justice and Consumers (PERS(2023) 76).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 15 May and 1 June 2023 (PERS(2023) 76/2 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 Mr REYNDERS, it then decided to appoint Ms Isabelle PERIGNON to the post.

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

**7.6. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR
AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2023) 13 TO /4)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy’ Directorate in DG Justice and Consumers (PERS(2023) 13 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 4 and 8 June 2023 (PERS(2023) 13/3 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 REYNDERS, it then decided to appoint Mr Julien MOUSNIER to the post.

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

**7.7. DG COMMUNICATION – DEPUTISING FOR THE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF DG COMMUNICATION**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, the Commission, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided, in accordance with Article 27 of the Rules of Procedure of the Commission, that Ms Daniela SPINANT, Director of the ‘Political Communication and Services’ Directorate and acting Deputy Director-General of DG Communication, would deputise for the post of Director-General of Communication during the period of vacancy resulting from the upcoming transfer of the current jobholder.

This decision would take effect on 16 September 2023.

**7.8. DG COMMUNICATION – INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT GRADE AD15/16
(PERS(2023) 77)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to authorise the publication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2023) 77 for the post of Director-General of DG Communication.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.9. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – TERMINATION OF THE SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR THE POST OF A DIRECTOR AT AD14/15, AND TRANSFER OF AN AD14 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS
(PERS(2022) 50)**

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

- to terminate with immediate effect the selection procedure for the post of Director of the ‘HR for Specific Sites and Services’ Directorate in DG Human Resources and Security, without making an appointment;
- to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Emanuele BALDACCI, currently Director of the ‘Resources’ Directorate at Eurostat, to the post of Director of the ‘HR for Specific Sites and Services’ Directorate in DG Human Resources and Security.

Unless indicated otherwise, the decision would take effect on 16 September 2023.

7.10. DG EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORT AND CULTURE – EXTENSION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY (EIT)

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

- to propose to the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) to extend the term of office of Mr Martin KERN as Director of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, for a duration of two years, with effect from 1 October 2023, in accordance with Regulation (EC) 2021/819;
- to ask Mr SCHINAS, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this decision to the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.11. DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION – EXTENSION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING (CEDEFOP)

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

- to propose to the Management Board of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training to extend the term of office of Mr Juergen SIEBEL as Executive Director of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, for a duration of five years, with effect from 1 September 2024, in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2019/128;

- to ask Mr SCHMIT, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this decision to the Management Board of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.12. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GLOBAL HEALTH EDCTP3 JOINT UNDERTAKING (GH EDCTP3 JU), AT GRADE AD14 (PERS(2023) 78 TO /3)

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

- to approve the list of three candidates, presented in alphabetical order, set out in point 11 of PERS(2023) 74, for the post of Executive Director of the Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking, and to consider this list as the Commission proposal;
- to ask Mr SCHINAS, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this decision to the Governing Board of the Global Health EDCTP3 Joint Undertaking.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

8. DECISION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AMENDING DECISION P(2019) 1 OF 1 DECEMBER 2019 ON THE ORGANISATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION, AND COMMUNICATION FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMISSION ON PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS DURING THE PERIOD OF THE TEMPORARY WITHDRAWAL OF EXECUTIVE VICE-

**PRESIDENT VESTAGER FROM THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION
(P(2023) 3 FINAL; P(2023) 4 FINAL)**

The Commission took note of the PRESIDENT's Decision and Communication set out in P(2023) 3 final and P(2023) 4 final.

**9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON DIGITALISATION IN SOCIAL SECURITY COORDINATION: FACILITATING FREE MOVEMENT IN THE SINGLE MARKET
(COM(2023) 501 AND /2; RCC(2023) 152)**

Mr DOMBROVSKIS explained that the aim of the Communication presented that day was to make cross-border access to social security services quicker and simpler by making full use of digital tools and reducing the administrative burden for citizens and businesses. In his view, this was a good example of the type of measure that the European Commission, together with the Member States, could take to improve the EU's competitiveness in the social and employment fields, in the same vein as the e-Declaration for posted workers.

He pointed out that the proposal would not add to the regulatory burden and would instead facilitate cross-border administrative procedures. Despite previous initiatives to improve the cross-border flow of information, many challenges remained in terms of access to and sharing of data in the field of social security. There were also costs associated with, for example, having entitlement documents issued and verified.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS highlighted the main objective of the Communication, which was to improve the exchange of information between national social security institutions and speed up the recognition of rights and the granting of benefits across national borders.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS then briefly presented the various elements needed to achieve this objective, namely (i) full implementation by the Member States of the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI), (ii) full development of the European Social Security Pass (ESSPASS) to enable the validity of documents to be checked in real time, and (iii) more procedures available online and increased interoperability of national systems.

The proposed measures built on broader digital initiatives already in place or in the pipeline, such as the EU Digital Identity Wallets. These different initiatives were intended to make it easier for European citizens to live, work and travel abroad, for businesses to operate in other EU countries and for national administrations to coordinate their social security activities across borders.

Mr SCHMIT then pointed out that the origins of this file dated back to the first European Commission under President HALLSTEIN. Considerable progress had since been achieved, despite occasional technical and political obstacles. Mr SCHMIT noted that the right to free movement was the cornerstone of the European single market and that there was therefore a need to further encourage cross-border mobility by removing barriers and red tape. This would also boost European growth and competitiveness.

In 2021, there were more than 16 million European citizens who lived or worked in a Member State of the European Union or the European Free Trade Association other than their country of origin. While the European social security coordination system ensured that these citizens had access to all the benefits for which they were eligible, they still faced difficulties and delays in proving their eligibility and accessing their benefits because of insufficient interoperability. In addition, businesses, and in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), faced increased costs and additional administrative burdens when providing services in another Member State. National administrations also faced difficulties when sharing and verifying data.

Mr SCHMIT therefore considered that there was great potential for improving and supporting fair labour mobility through further digitalisation of social security. This was part of the EU's overall effort to speed up its digital transition.

The Communication proposed took stock of the progress made so far with several EU cross-sectoral initiatives that supported the development of cross-border digital public services. It also provided an overview of ongoing initiatives in the field of digitalisation and social security coordination, such as the Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information (EESSI), the European Social Security Pass (ESSPASS) pilot project, the European Tracking Service for pensions, the e-Declaration for posting of workers, electronic cross-border health services (myHealth@EU) and European Personal Labour Cards in the construction sector.

Lastly, Mr SCHMIT noted that the Communication contained proposals for future measures intended to enable Member States to take full advantage of the benefits of digitalisation, and highlighted several areas in which they were encouraged to take action. They should, for example, finalise the implementation of EESSI by the end of 2024, put in place additional, fully online social security coordination procedures by 2025, fully engage in ESSPASS pilot activities and join the two consortia of Member State institutions for the verification of portable document A1 and the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). They should also make progress on the introduction of European Digital Identity Wallets and work towards more integrated and digitalised social security coordination by investing in digitalisation efforts at national and European level.

He concluded by stating that the Commission was fully committed to guiding and supporting Member States in this process by providing them with co-financing and technical expertise, and that it had also asked the European Labour Authority (ELA) to assist national administrations in sharing best practices.

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

- a reminder that the initiative was part of the Digital Decade 2030 Policy Programme, which aimed to digitalise 100% of public services by 2030, and for which a first progress report would shortly be presented to the College;
- the observation that interoperability was a crucial issue for the Member States, who were however not all technically equipped enough to make this possible;
- the ongoing work within the Commission to ensure that European institutions staff could benefit from these advances;
- the importance of action that helped bring the EU closer to its citizens, particularly in the context of the European Health Union, with the creation of a single data space for health through the digitalisation of individual prescriptions, protocols and medical reports.

In response to the questions raised, Mr SCHMIT considered that the delays in the digitalisation of national social security systems were generally caused by a lack of technical preparation.

The PRESIDENT concluded the item by noting that, beyond the forms to be filled in, it was often the lengthy procedures and the long response times that hindered cross-border initiatives.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2023) 501/2 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.

10. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING THE EUROPEAN DISABILITY CARD AND THE EUROPEAN PARKING CARD FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

(COM(2023) 512 AND /2; SWD(2023) 289; SWD(2023) 290 AND /2; SWD(2023) 291; SEC(2023) 305; RCC(2023) 153)

Ms JOUROVÁ and Ms DALLI presented the Commission's legislative proposal introducing a standardised European Disability Card and enhancing the existing European Parking Card for persons with disabilities.

Ms JOUROVÁ explained that approximately 87 million persons in the European Union live with some form of disability. She clarified that the proposal on the table does not aim to harmonise the criteria for obtaining disability status within each Member State. Instead, it seeks mutual recognition of this status throughout the Union. This would simplify the exercise of free movement for many people with disabilities, who often face structural barriers and systemic inequalities because their status is not automatically recognised when travelling to another Member State. Overcoming these barriers could also generate an economic boost, estimated at over EUR 3 billion per year.

Ms JOUROVÁ concluded by stressing that this essential proposal builds on the success of an EU Disability Card pilot project conducted in eight Member States between 2016 and 2018, as well as on a European model for a Disability Parking Card established by a 1988 Council Recommendation. It delivered on one of the flagship initiatives under the Union of Equality.

Ms DALLI then highlighted that the structural barriers and systemic inequalities faced by people with disabilities when travelling between Member States was a recurring issue brought up in discussions with civil society and relevant stakeholders. She noted that the mutual recognition of disability status across the Union would also positively impact the tourism industry.

The current proposal only applied to EU citizens and their family members. The Commission planned to present a complementary legal act before end 2024 to extend the rights set out in the proposed Directive to third country nationals legally residing in the EU and eligible to travel to another Member State.

Ms DALLI concluded by expressing optimism about the outcome of the interinstitutional negotiations for the adoption of the proposal, and stressed that it showed the Commission's continuous commitment to enhancing the rights of people with disabilities.

The PRESIDENT thanked Ms JOUROVÁ and Ms DALLI for this important initiative, which would greatly benefit people with disabilities in Europe.

Following these presentations, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Directive in COM(2023) 512/2 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 document, the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2023) 289, SWD(2023) 290/2, SWD(2023) 291 and SEC(2023) 305, the contents of which were noted.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

The PRESIDENT informed the College that she would speak with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Mr Rishi SUNAK, later that day.

She recalled that the agreement on the Windsor Framework reached in February 2023 allowed the EU and the UK to open a new chapter in their partnership, based on mutual trust and full cooperation. The UK association to certain EU programmes was governed by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. However, it did not address in detail the modalities of the UK's participation in EU programmes.

The call with Mr SUNAK could therefore facilitate the conclusion of discussions in this respect, with a political agreement on the UK's participation in Horizon Europe – the EU's research, and innovation programme – and Copernicus – the EU's world-leading Earth observation programme.

Under such a political agreement, the UK would be required to contribute financially to the EU budget and would also be subject to all the safeguards of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, with security exceptions continuing to apply. Overall, the UK would contribute an estimated €2.6 billion per year on average for its participation to both Horizon Europe and the Copernicus component of the EU Space Programme.

The PRESIDENT thanked both Mr ŠEFČOVIČ and Mr HAHN for their work over the summer, which had prepared the ground to make such an agreement possible. It also addressed concerns expressed by the international scientific and academic community.

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

- full support of the College for the agreement on the UK's participation in the Horizon Europe and Copernicus programmes;
- the recognition that the international community would welcome such a deal;
- the importance of preserving the EU's interests and maintaining its autonomy, in particular as regards the Copernicus programme and critical technologies.

The Commission took note of this information.

11.2. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

At the PRESIDENT's request, Mr BORRELL reported on the latest developments in the field of the EU's external relations.

Over the summer, the international agenda had been dominated by the recent military coup in Niger and the ongoing hostilities in Ukraine. These two topics had been the subject of intense discussions at the informal meetings of defence ministers and foreign ministers (Gymnich) held in Toledo, Spain, on 29 and 30 August, and on 31 August, respectively.

The Ukrainian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dmytro KULEBA, had been invited to take part in the discussions and to brief ministers about the situation on the ground. Ukrainian armed forces were maintaining the initiative on the frontline and had broken through Russia's first line of defence in the Zaporizhzhya region in southern Ukraine.

The discussions with ministers had more specifically focused on the EU's security commitments with regard to Ukraine, particularly financial support for military supplies under the European Peace Facility. A new envelope had thus been proposed in order to finance a Ukraine Assistance Fund totalling up to EUR 20 billion over the next 4 years. The issue of training for Ukrainian soldiers had also been discussed, with the EU having proposed a new target to bring the number of Ukrainian soldiers trained to 40 000 over the coming months, as the previous target of 30 000 soldiers had already been achieved.

Discussions on the new envelope would continue in the Council with a view to securing an agreement, hopefully before the end of the year. However, Mr BORRELL stressed the urgent need to release the eighth tranche of financing under the European Peace Facility in the interim. Financial support for Ukraine also needed to be viewed in the broader context of the revised financial outlook for the EU.

The Peace Formula put forward by the Ukrainian President Volodymyr ZELENSKY was gaining traction among Ukraine's global partners, as demonstrated by the meeting organised by Saudi Arabia on 5 and 6 August in Jeddah, which had been attended by more than 40 countries. Nevertheless, it appeared that many countries in Africa and Latin America still harboured doubts regarding Russia's policy of weaponising food supplies. Mr BORRELL also referred to the outcome of the recent BRICS Summit (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) that had been held in Johannesburg. He stressed the importance of carefully assessing the implications of any future expansion of the BRICS group.

Against this backdrop, the EU had adopted a moderate stance with regard to these different initiatives, reaffirming the principle of freedom of association and seeking to avoid any antagonism, while nevertheless drawing a clear distinction between the EU's vision of an open international order and the vision espoused by authoritarian states, which was a threat to global security.

Mr BORRELL then reported on the latest developments following the military coup in Niger. He had been in contact with the President, Mohamed BAZOUM, who had been overthrown by his own presidential guard and was currently being held captive in the presidential palace. The EU Member States had strongly condemned the military coup and called for the release of the President and his family.

They had also supported the diplomatic efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to restore constitutional order in Niger. Moreover, ECOWAS representatives had been invited to take part in discussions with the Member States at the recent informal meetings of defence ministers and foreign ministers in order to improve the coordination of diplomatic initiatives and consider a regime of EU sanctions against the leaders of the military junta.

Mr BORRELL pointed out that the EU Member States still had to align their positions regarding the approach to be adopted in the Sahel in order to shape a common course of action, assess the impact of instability in the region on migratory flows and determine the extent to which EU financial support for certain countries in the region was still justified in the current climate.

He then expressed his concern regarding the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh following the closure of the Lachin corridor by the Azerbaijani authorities. The corridor was the only land link between Nagorno-Karabakh and the Republic of Armenia and was used to supply food and electricity to people living in Karabakh. For this reason, he had issued a statement on 26 July calling on the Azerbaijani authorities to guarantee security and freedom of movement along the Lachin corridor.

Lastly, Mr BORRELL informed the College that he would travel to Georgia the following day to discuss the candidate country's progress on the road to European integration and to exchange views on foreign policy and regional issues in the broader sense.

The Commission took note of this information.

11.3. STATE OF PLAY OF GRAIN EXPORTS FROM UKRAINE

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr DOMBROVSKIS then gave an update on the situation regarding exports of Ukrainian agricultural products. He began by pointing out that a Joint Coordination Platform had been established following the PRESIDENT's visit to Kyiv on 9 May to improve agrifood exports from Ukraine to the EU and third countries.

There had since been eight meetings of the Platform to work on the following areas: (i) strengthening the capacity of the Solidarity Lanes, (ii) monitoring the flows of agricultural goods entering the EU, (iii) removing administrative barriers and clarifying customs procedures for Ukrainian products, and

(iv) deciding on and investing in improvements to the infrastructure of the solidarity lanes.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS stressed the increased importance of this work since the end of the Black Sea Grain Initiative agreement on 17 July. Ukraine had recently been the victim of ten Russian attacks on its port infrastructure, including recently on its Danube ports neighbouring the EU, leading to the destruction of almost 270 000 tonnes of grain in total. Four Ukrainian vessels, including one carrying grain, had nevertheless managed to leave the Black Sea from the port of Odesa, where they had been anchored since February 2022.

He pointed out that the Danube corridor could also allow the transportation of a stable grain capacity of almost 4 million tonnes per month by the end of 2023, out of an estimated total export volume of 4.7 million tonnes per month. He welcomed the ongoing work to create a green lane for road transport between Ukraine and Romania via Moldova, to ensure border waiting times of no more than 15 minutes.

The previous week, a Commission delegation had travelled on-site to examine the installations on the ground and ways of achieving the necessary capacities. The security corridors established between the EU and Ukraine had already made it possible to increase the volumes transported by drastically reducing logistical barriers. Between May 2022 and July 2023, Ukraine was thereby able to export 88 million tonnes of goods and to import 31 million, with a total estimated value of EUR 99 billion. Ukrainian grain exports had increased compared to the previous year, despite the precarious security situation and the autonomous trade measures in place since the beginning of May.

In this connection, Mr DOMBROVSKIS noted that these measures would expire on 15 September, which raised the question of next steps.

The PRESIDENT stressed that, contrary to the justifications given by Russia for ending the Black Sea Grain Initiative, its targeted bombardments clearly aimed to destroy an essential source of economic income for Ukraine. She pointed out the difficulty of building infrastructure and managing the related administrative burden in the context of war.

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

- the excellent work of the Joint Coordination Platform, and the absolute need for Ukraine to maintain its commercial activity;
- the possible room for improvement on the quantities that could be transported thanks to investment in the Solidarity Lanes, but less so on the total export costs that were more market-dependent;
- the new coordination programme implemented between the Commission, Romania, Ukraine and the United States to facilitate trade flows;
- the possibility for Ukrainian vessels to transit through EU territorial waters, despite the suspension of the Black Sea Grain Initiative;
- the difficulties that could arise from an interruption of the autonomous trade measures.

In response to the points raised, Mr DOMBROVSKIS pointed out that rapidly increasing Ukraine's export capacity must be a priority for the EU, towards which the necessary financial support would need to be allocated.

The PRESIDENT highlighted the massive investment in developing transport infrastructure in the Member States bordering Ukraine, which would also have positive longer-term effects on the trading capacities of those countries.

The Commission took note of this information.

11.4. CIVIL PROTECTION OPERATIONS DURING THE SUMMER

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr LENARČIČ for the remarkable work carried out in a summer marked by natural disasters, during which the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) had demonstrated its effectiveness. She then asked him to report to the College on the measures taken during the summer with the support of the Civil Protection Mechanism.

Mr LENARČIČ noted that this had been a summer of extreme weather events in Europe, with record-breaking wildfires in Greece, and wildfires in Cyprus, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Tunisia. At the same time, catastrophic floods had occurred in Slovenia, as well as in Sweden and Norway.

Other records were broken this summer, with the Civil Protection Mechanism being activated for the first time on the same day – 6 August – for both floods in Slovenia and wildfires in Cyprus. Mr LENARČIČ thanked the PRESIDENT for visiting Slovenia in the wake of the worst floods in its history, thus demonstrating the EU's solidarity with that Member State and its people. Assistance had also been provided on this occasion by Bosnia and Herzegovina, a member of the Civil Protection Mechanism, and by the Ukrainian authorities, who made available their best equipment to deal with the emergency, despite Ukraine's own needs in the context of the Russian invasion.

A further sad record was the Alexandroupolis forest fire in Greece which was still not under control, and was Europe's biggest wildfire since records began in 2000. An area of almost 100 000 hectares had been burnt, which was more than the cities of Berlin and Paris combined; at least 20 people had been killed.

Greece had activated the Civil Protection Mechanism in August, resulting in the largest air operation carried out by the rescEU reserve to date. Eleven firefighting planes and one Blackhawk helicopter had been deployed

by the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC). The resources made available by rescEU had recently been doubled at the initiative expressed by the PRESIDENT at 2022 SOTEU. This had allowed the EU to play a decisive role in providing emergency assistance to countries affected by natural disasters over the summer.

The Civil Protection Mechanism had been activated no fewer than 12 times since the beginning of the year to deal with extreme weather events in Europe, generating more than 60 offers from EU Member States and participating states. The increasingly frequent activation of the mechanism was unfortunately fitting into a broader pattern of climate change effects, involving simultaneous and more extreme weather events such as droughts and flooding, which the dry ground could not absorb.

The EU had continued to show solidarity at international level. During the summer, it had provided two Canadairs to Tunisia and 350 firefighters to Canada to fight wildfires, as well as temporary shelters and medical teams to Bangladesh during the heavy rains that had triggered flash floods in the south-east of the country.

Mr LENARČIČ pointed out that although the 2023 wildfire season had not yet ended, the upward trend in such fires appeared to have been confirmed in Europe since 2014. In particular, the 390 000 hectares already burnt this year represented 100 000 hectares more than the cumulative average burnt area recorded each year by the end of August.

While this challenging summer had shown how useful the Union Civil Protection Mechanism was, there was a need for more resilience to cope with weather events that were likely to multiply and worsen in the years to come.

Underlining the importance of the rescEU reserve in complementing the efforts of Member States, Mr LENARČIČ considered it essential to continue strengthening the operational capacities of the Mechanism. There should be

more focus on prevention, and the implementation of the European Green Deal should be speeded up. It was no longer possible to prevent certain weather events, which therefore needed to be tackled by measures to adapt to climate change. This would require more investment in resilience by mobilising all available funds under EU policies.

The Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve (SEAR) was still largely underfunded, despite the additional support recently approved by the Member States. It would therefore have to be further strengthened in future in order to provide the necessary emergency aid in the event of natural disasters, whether in the EU or beyond.

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

- the fact that the EU Civil Protection Mechanism was directly relevant to European citizens affected by natural disasters and also for people in need of humanitarian aid outside the EU;
- the recurrence or even increase in extreme weather events in the coming years, which required long-term action to adapt and build resilience to climate change;
- the importance of Member States' support for the revision of the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to promote preventive measures, particularly in water and forest management, at national, regional and local levels;
- for some, the limited flexibility of budget margins and funds available under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

The PRESIDENT ended the discussion by stressing the priority to be given to preventing natural disasters, in particular by adapting land management to

cope with the consequences of climate change. Various EU funds had been made available to finance the emergency assistance provided to Slovenia. For the purposes of prevention, it could be conceivable to use *NextGenerationEU* loans not taken up.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 12.22.