



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2023) 2467 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 8 November 2023

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2467th meeting of the Commission
held in Brussels
(Berlaymont)
on Wednesday 27 September 2023
(morning)**

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Single sitting: Wednesday 27 September 2023 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.08 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 10 (in part) and 11
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	Items 9 to 11
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	Items 9 to 11
Mr SCHMIT	Member	Items 8 to 11
Mr GENTILONI	Member	Items 8 to 11
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	Items 8 to 11
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	Items 9 to 11
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	
Ms IVANOVA	Member	

Absent:

Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President
Mr HAHN	Member

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

Mr LESCRAUWAET	Expert in Mr DOMBROVSKIS's cabinet
Mr SCICLUNA	Head of Cabinet to Ms ŠUICA
Ms BIKAR	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Mr HAHN

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Mr LADENBURGER	Deputy Director-General, Legal Service
Ms SPINANT	Acting 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
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General
Mr CHARLES	Secretariat-General

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

The PRESIDENT warmly welcomed Ms IVANOVA, the new Member of the College responsible for innovation, research, culture, education and youth.

Ms IVANOVA was honoured to be joining the European Commission. She explained that she had begun her political career as an MEP in 2009, later moving to the European Court of Auditors, where her role had provided opportunities for fruitful discussions with several Members of the Commission. She was enthusiastic about her new role as a Member of the College and was looking forward to working closely with the PRESIDENT and all the Commissioners.

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1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2023) 2467/FINAL; SEC(2023) 2467/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) 2467)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 25 September 2023.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2465th and 2466th meetings of 6 and 12 September 2023 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2023) 159)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 22 September 2023 (RCC(2023) 159).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Agreement on the European election recess period in 2024 for the transmission of delegated acts and draft measures adopted under the regulatory procedure with scrutiny (RPS)**

Line set out in SPI(2023) 38/2.

- **Harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and amendment of certain Union legislative acts (Regulation) – BENIFEI & TUDORACHE report – 2021/0106 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 342/2.

- **Horizontal cybersecurity requirements for products with digital elements and amending Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 (Regulation) – DANTI report – 2022/0272 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 343.

- **Protection of the environment through criminal law and replacement of Directive 2008/99/EC (Directive) – MANDERS report – 2021/0422 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 345.

- **Fees and charges payable to the European Medicines Agency, amendment of Regulation (EU) 2017/745 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repeal of Council Regulation (EC) No 297/95 and Regulation (EU)**

**658/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Regulation) –
BUŞOI report – 2022/0417 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 339.

- **Tenerife Declaration on the Global Dimension and Sustainability of
Research Infrastructures**

Line set out in SI(2023) 353.

- **Oral question O-000030/2023 – The new European strategy for a better
internet for kids (BIK+)**

Line set out in SP(2023) 470.

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 II and July 2023 part-sessions**

Line set out in SP(2023) 474/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Establishment of a common framework for media services in the internal
market (European Media Freedom Act) and amendment of
Directive 2010/13/EU (Regulation) – VERHEYEN report –
2022/0277 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2023) 462/2.

- **Protection of the Union and its Member States from economic coercion by
third countries (Regulation) – LANGE report – 2021/0406 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 466, further to note SI(2023) 235, which the

Commission had already approved on 20 June 2023.

– **European green bonds (Regulation) – TANG report – 2021/0191 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 467, further to note SI(2023) 51, which the Commission had already approved on 14 March 2023.

– **Amendment of Directive 2011/83/EU concerning financial services contracts concluded at a distance and repeal of Directive 2002/65/EC (Directive) – KOKALARI report – 2022/0147 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 468, further to note SI(2023) 231, which the Commission had already approved on 20 June 2023.

– **Amendment of Directive 2010/40/EU on the framework for the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems in the field of road transport and for interfaces with other modes of transport (Directive) – PLUMB report – 2021/0419 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2023) 469, further to note SI(2023) 232, which the Commission had already approved on 20 June 2023.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2023) 31 TO /3; RCC(2023) 32)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2023) 31/3 and RCC(2023) 32 of the meetings of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 13 and 20 September 2023.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

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6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2023) 286 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 18 and 24 September 2023.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2023) 287 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 18 and 24 September 2023.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2023) 288 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 18 and 24 September 2023 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2023) 289 TO /3)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 25 and 29 September 2023, and of a finalisation written procedure.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2023) 290)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2023) 80)

**7.1. DG DEFENCE INDUSTRY AND SPACE – APPOINTMENT OF A
DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2023) 81 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 ‘Satellite Navigation and Earth Observation’ Directorate in DG Defence Industry and Space (PERS(2023) 81).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 3 May and 22 June 2023 (PERS(2023) 81/2 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 BRETON, it then decided to appoint Mr Christoph KAUTZ to the post.

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

**7.2. DG MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES – APPOINTMENT OF A
DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2023) 82 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 ‘General Affairs and Resources’ Directorate in DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (PERS(2023) 82).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 28 April and 7 July 2023 (PERS(2023) 82/2 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 SINKEVIČIUS, it then decided to appoint Mr Juergen MUELLER to the post.

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

**7.3. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – APPOINTMENT OF A
DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2023) 83 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 ‘Digital, EU4Health and Health Systems Modernisation’ Directorate in DG Health and Food Safety (PERS(2023) 83).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 14 March and 25 May 2023 (PERS(2023) 83/2 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 KYRIAKIDES, it then decided to appoint Mr Marco MARSELLA to the post.

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

**7.4. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – APPOINTMENT OF A
DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2023) 84 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 ‘Medical Products and Innovation’ Directorate in DG Health and Food Safety (PERS(2023) 84).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 14 March and 8 June 2023 (PERS(2023) 84/2 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 KYRIAKIDES, it then decided to appoint Mr Rainer BECKER to the post.

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

**7.5. DG COMMUNICATION NETWORKS, CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGY – ADOPTION OF A LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN CYBERSECURITY INDUSTRIAL, TECHNOLOGY AND RESEARCH COMPETENCE CENTRE (ECCC) AT GRADE AD14
(PERS(2023) 85 TO /3)**

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

- to approve the list of two candidates, presented in alphabetical order, set out in point 5 of PERS(2023) 80, for the post of Executive Director of the European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre, in Bucharest, and to consider this list as the Commission proposal;
- to ask the Member of the Commission responsible, Mr BRETON, to communicate this decision to the governing board of the European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.6. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – ADOPTION OF A LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS (FRA) AT GRADE AD14
(PERS(2023) 86 TO /3)**

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

- to approve the list of four candidates, presented in alphabetical order, set out in point 6 of PERS(2023) 80, for the post of Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, in Vienna, and to consider this list as the Commission proposal;
- to ask Mr REYNDERS, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this decision to the governing board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.7. DG CLIMATE – 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 Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, the Commission decided:

- to create a temporary post of Principal Adviser for industrial decarbonisation in DG Climate Action (CLIMA.PA03); this post would be abolished upon the departure of the job-holder;
- to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Marzena ROGALSKA, currently Principal Adviser for equal opportunities in DG Human Resources and Security (HR.PA03), to the temporary post of Principal Adviser for industrial decarbonisation in DG Climate Action (CLIMA.PA03).

These decisions would take effect on 1 October 2023.

7.8. DG INFORMATICS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART AND INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14/15, AND EXTERNAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14, OF A DIRECTOR POST (SEC(2023) 328; PERS(2023) 87)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided:

- to change the name of the Directorate-General for Informatics to the Directorate-General for Digital Services;
- to create a temporary post of Director, and to change the level of the post of Head of the DIGIT.CERT-EU Task Force (Computer Emergency Response Team), currently set at ‘Head of Unit’ level, to ‘Director’ level for the remaining term of the Task Force;
- to create a temporary unit, DIGIT.CERT-EU.1 ‘Cybersecurity services’, reporting directly to the DIGIT.CERT-EU Task Force (Computer Emergency Response Team) for the remaining term of the Task Force;
- to authorise, with immediate effect, the publication in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), (1)(b) and (2) of the Staff Regulations of the vacancy notice in PERS(2023) 87 for the temporary post of Director, Head of the DIGIT.CERT-EU Task Force (Computer Emergency Response Team), in DG Informatics;
- to approve the organisation chart set out in SEC(2023) 328.

Unless indicated otherwise, these decisions would take effect on 1 November 2023.

7.9. DG INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMES – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART,

***AUTHORISATION TO RECRUIT A TEMPORARY STAFF MEMBER,
UNDER ARTICLE 2(A) OF THE CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OF
OTHER SERVANTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, AND EXTERNAL
PUBLICATION OF A VACANCY NOTICE FOR AN ADVISER HORS
CLASSE AT GRADE AD15
(PERS(2023) 88)***

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

- to create a post of EU SME Envoy, at Adviser hors classe level, principally reporting to the PRESIDENT for all their activities. With regard to all activities relating to SMEs, the post-holder would also report to the Commissioner responsible for the internal market, and in administrative terms would report to the Director-General of DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs. This DG's departments would provide all the administrative and logistical support required, whilst the 'SME' unit (GROW.A.2) in particular would provide support for the core work;
- to authorise the recruitment of a member of the temporary staff at grade AD15, under Article 2(a) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union, with a view to filling the post of EU SME Envoy at Adviser hors classe level in DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, for a period of four years, renewable once for a maximum of two years;
- to authorise, with immediate effect, the external publication under Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations of the vacancy notice in PERS(2023) 88 for the post of EU SME Envoy.

Unless indicated otherwise, these decisions would take effect on 1 October 2023.

**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
(P(2023) 5)**

The Commission took note of the decision of the PRESIDENT set out in P(2023) 5.

**9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE
EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE
COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – TOWARDS A MORE RESILIENT,
COMPETITIVE AND SUSTAINABLE EUROPE
(COM(2023) 558 TO /3; RCC(2023) 165)**

The PRESIDENT presented the Communication, which took stock of the achievements and challenges that remained in building a more resilient, competitive and sustainable economy that protected EU citizens and guaranteed their well-being, in line with the Versailles Declaration adopted by EU leaders on 11 March 2022. This Communication was a contribution from the Commission to the informal meeting of Heads of State or Government to be held in Granada on 6 October.

She highlighted that, within a few weeks of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the EU had succeeded in swiftly presenting a united and comprehensive response to the war and its consequences, making remarkable progress on crucial issues such as defence and security, energy, strategic competitiveness and technological sovereignty.

The PRESIDENT also noted that migration would be one of the key topics to be discussed by EU leaders in Granada with a particular focus on external border controls and interactions with third countries. In this context, she explained that

legal migration to Europe, which she considered crucial for the continent's labour market, had reached about 3.7 million people in 2022, whereas only 330 000 people had crossed the EU's borders illegally that year. Only 43% of asylum applications had been accepted in 2022, and of a total of around 425 000 return decisions issued that year, only 77 000 had actually been implemented. The PRESIDENT therefore stressed that the main challenge was to better manage the flows of illegal migrants by establishing the necessary cooperation with the countries of origin. She concluded this point by stressing the importance of adopting the European Pact on Migration and Asylum to preserve the overall balance.

The PRESIDENT said that EU leaders would also exchange views on enlargement and the necessary reforms, reminding the College that the Union could not afford to be complacent towards the candidate countries.

In this context, she noted that the review of the EU's economic governance and the mid-term review of the Multiannual Financial Framework were of crucial importance. In particular, progress was needed on the Multiannual Financial Framework, as EU funds to support Member States in the area of migration and in other areas were depleting rapidly.

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Ms JOUROVÁ highlighted the two main messages of the Communication. First, the temporary solutions put in place to address the many challenges arising from Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine needed to be integrated into longer-term strategies. Second, faced with this new major crisis, the EU had proven itself capable of reacting quickly.

She also felt that the achievements of the EU and its Member States had exceeded initial expectations. However, several challenges remained in need of particular attention from the EU. In this context, Ms JOUROVÁ stressed that, ahead of winter, the EU and its Member States must remain vigilant, especially as far as the energy situation was concerned, while risks to Europe's competitiveness also remained high.

Ms JOUROVÁ also noted that the reviews of the Multiannual Financial Framework and the EU's economic governance were essential, adding that Member States needed to step up their efforts to tackle disinformation and hybrid threats that had the potential to divide Western society.

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

- the importance of an in-depth discussion among EU leaders on the key issues of defence and security, energy and competitiveness;
- concerning defence and security, the reminder that immediate measures had been taken at the request of EU leaders to boost cooperation and efficiency, in particular through the proposal for an Action in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP), which aimed at increasing the production of ammunition in Europe in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. In this regard, reference was made to the possibility of significantly increasing ammunition production over the coming 18-24 months in collaboration with the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP);
- recognition of the successful 25% reduction in the gas needs of European industry;
- a reminder of the progress made in promoting the EU's strategic autonomy, in particular through the agreement on the European Chips Act, as well as the significant advances made in clean technologies and batteries;
- appreciation of the Commission's actions to ensure a level playing field for European companies, both within the single market and vis-à-vis third countries.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2023) 558/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments.

10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – REPORT ON THE STATE OF THE DIGITAL DECADE 2023 (COM(2023) 570 TO /3; SWD(2023) 570; SWD(2023) 571; SWD(2023) 572; SWD(2023) 573; SWD(2023) 574; RCC(2023) 164)

Ms JOUROVÁ explained the political background to the annual report on the Digital Decade. She pointed out that the Digital Decade Policy Programme 2030 had entered into force at the beginning of the year and that the Commission was now being asked to adopt the first-ever annual progress report it had to produce within that framework.

Ms JOUROVÁ said that the report was the baseline for all the work to be carried out in the coming years on the Digital Decade. It called on the Member States to take collective action, in close cooperation with the Commission, to close the current investment gaps, speed up the digital transformation in Europe and step up efforts to achieve the targets of the Digital Decade Policy Programme.

The policy programme sought to do more than merely regulate the digital sphere in the EU. It aimed to strengthen Europe's technological capabilities and to do so in an inclusive and human-centric manner, which was why the annual report also covered the European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles.

Thanks to the Digital Decade, the EU was building new capabilities in four important areas for both citizens and business:

- (i) the digital skills citizens needed to be fully involved in the digital transformation and the skills needed by businesses to be able to innovate and compete on global markets;
- (ii) the first-class digital infrastructure that companies needed to achieve those objectives, ranging from connectivity to computing power and cloud

computing. It was also important for all citizens to have good connectivity wherever they lived in the EU;

- (iii) digitising government to make public services much more efficient for businesses and citizens, provided that everyone had access to them;
- (iv) measures to support businesses in the digital transformation, including incentives to increase the number of European digital start-ups and unicorns, without leaving behind the many traditional European SMEs.

Ms JOUROVÁ noted that all of this had already been very important when developing the Digital Decade Policy Programme and that the COVID-19 pandemic had revealed certain vulnerabilities in the EU, both in terms of critical parts of digital technology supply chains and in terms of disinformation and foreign interference in European democracies.

Lastly, she pointed out that Russia's war against Ukraine had taken all those concerns to the next level and that the European response had to rise to those new challenges. She concluded that this priority was also reflected in the annual report, which clearly stated that all Member States had to step up their efforts individually and cooperate with each other in areas beyond their national influence.

Mr BRETON then presented the content of the report in more detail and began by noting that this first annual progress report on the Digital Decade Policy Programme was accompanied by country-specific recommendations to ensure that national efforts were aligned with the common targets. The report covered all dimensions of the digital transformation of society and was based on a robust methodology that resulted from in-depth work by the Commission departments.

Mr BRETON summarised the main messages of the report, stressing that Member States had to do more collectively and that, despite a general trend towards better digitalisation in the EU, there were still major differences in the implementation of the Digital Decade. He then highlighted three aspects worthy of particular attention:

(i) connectivity, (ii) digitalisation of businesses and (iii) digital skills.

As regards connectivity, he explained that 55% of rural households were still not served by a very high-capacity network and 9% were still not covered by a fixed broadband network. The current 5G still did not fully meet the expectations of its end users or the needs of industry in terms of quality and latency. There was therefore a massive investment gap of around EUR 200 billion, which had to be filled in cooperation with the relevant economic players, in order to build a new network and metadata storage architecture.

As regards the digitalisation of businesses, Mr BRETON pointed out that, without additional investment, by 2030 only 66% of them would use cloud computing, 34% big data and 20% artificial intelligence, whereas the European target for EU businesses to adopt those technologies was 75%.

Lastly, with regard to digital skills, he drew attention to the projections according to which, if the status quo continued until 2030, only 59% of the population would master basic digital skills (compared with a European target of 80%) and the number of specialists in the field would not exceed 12 million (whereas the EU had a target of 20 million).

Mr BRETON concluded by stressing the need for further reflection in those three specific areas so as to speed up work on digitalisation, with close cooperation between the Commission and the Member States.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the report in COM(2023) 570/3 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, together with the staff working documents distributed as SWD(2023) 570, SWD(2023) 571, SWD(2023) 572, SWD(2023) 573 and SWD(2023) 574, the contents of which were noted.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Mr BORRELL began by referring to the situation in Armenia following Azerbaijan's attack on the enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh. To date, more than 20 000 Armenians had left the enclave via a safe corridor. He noted that the European Union and the United States were providing humanitarian assistance on the ground and stressed that it was now important to prevent any destabilisation of the situation in Armenia.

Second, he referred to the recent tensions between Serbia and Kosovo* following the attack on police officers that had taken place on Sunday 24 September in northern Kosovo. In his view, this was a dangerous development and, while waiting for evidence that might prove who was responsible for the attack, thought should be given to the idea of deploying international missions to bring northern Kosovo back under international control. Lastly, he noted that discussions were ongoing with the countries concerned and that normalising their relations was part of accession negotiations.

Mr SCHINAS then briefed the College on his visit to several countries in West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea and Senegal). The visit had taken place against the backdrop of both the global migration crisis and the arrival of thousands of irregular immigrants on the Italian island of Lampedusa. The visit also addressed the need to improve dialogue with the main countries of emigration with a view to those countries readmitting their own citizens if they were not eligible to claim asylum, as set out in the 10-point action plan presented by the PRESIDENT during her visit to Lampedusa on 17 September.

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

He welcomed the fact that an agreement had been reached with the three countries he had visited regarding the return of their citizens. In his view, identifying individuals arriving unlawfully on EU soil was now a priority and the necessary resources should be allocated accordingly. He also highlighted Senegal's important role in the region, as it housed a border-control centre funded entirely by the European Union. In this connection, he stressed the political importance of formalising the agreement between Senegal and FRONTEX.

Mr SCHINAS pointed to the lessons to be learnt from these field visits, the first being that discussions with countries of origin should be broader in scope and not focus solely on the question of illegal immigration to Europe. He welcomed the success of the Team Europe approach and the European Commission's constructive and consistent messaging on the issue of immigration, both bilaterally and in international fora. Another lesson learnt from these visits was that, aside from organising an ad hoc conference, the international coalition against traffickers and smugglers should also incorporate a specific proposal on available financial resources.

By way of conclusion, the PRESIDENT noted that it was important to destroy the business model of human traffickers and that repatriation was an important and necessary part of that process. In her view, investing in countries of origin was essential, as improved living conditions would stop people from emigrating. She too welcomed the fact that the Team Europe approach had proven to be a success and noted that the issue of aid for developing countries was now more relevant than ever.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 10.09.