EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2024) 2489 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 12 June 2024

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2489th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 10 April 2024

(morning)

PV(2024) 2489 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

EN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Single sitting</u>: Wednesday 10 April 2024 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.13 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

<u>Present:</u>

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 8.2
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	Items 1 to 8.1 (in part)
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	Items 6 to 8.1 (in part)
Mr HAHN	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	Items 1 to 8.1 (in part)
Mr REYNDERS	Member	Items 1 to 8.1 (in part)
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	Items 1 to 8.1 (in part)
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VĂLEAN	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	Items 1 to 7
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	
Ms IVANOVA	Member	Items 1 to 8.2 (in part)
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member	

Absent:

Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
Mr SCHMIT	Member
Mr GENTILONI	Member
for Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member

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

Mr STENGG	Member of Ms VESTAGER's cabinet	
Mr SCICLUNA	Head of Cabinet to Ms ŠUICA	Item 8 (in part)
Ms KRIKOU	Member of Mr SCHINAS' cabinet	Items 1 to 8 (in part)
Ms BERTULESSI	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Mr SCHMIT	
Mr BALASSONE	Head of Cabinet to Mr GENTILONI	
Mr ROSSIDES	Head of Cabinet to Ms KYRIAKIDES	Item 8 (in part)
Ms TEEDUMÄE	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Mr VÁRHELYI	
Mr LAHTI	Head of Cabinet to Ms URPILAINEN	Item 8
Ms PREISING	Head of Cabinet to Mr SINKEVIČIUS	

The following also sat in:

Mr WHELAN	Acting Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms SPINANT	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr MAMER	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms PODESTA	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms WERNER	Deputy Secretary General	Item 6 (in part)
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr FLOSDORFF	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Items 6 and 7

Mr VAN KEMSEKE	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Ms MICELI	Head of Policy Coordination in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Items 6 and 7
Ms SEMLALI	Policy Assistant in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	
Mr LETTA	Community Policy Expert	Item 6
Mr PHILIPPART	Assistant to Mr LETTA	Item 6
Ms BUKA	Secretariat-General	

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

1. AGENDAS
(OJ(2024) 2489/FINAL; SEC(2024) 2489/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(2024) 2489)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 8 April 2024.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES
(PV(2024) 2484; PV(2024) 2485)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2484th and 2485th meetings of 27 February and 5 March 2024, and held over approval of the minutes of its 2486th, 2487th and 2488th meetings of 12, 20 and 27 March 2024 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(RCC(2024) 88)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on Friday 5 April 2024 (RCC(2024) 88).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

– **Establishment of the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans (Regulation) – RESSLER & PICULA report – 2023/0397 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 198.

- **Packaging and packaging waste, amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and Directive (EU) 2019/904, and repeal of Directive 94/62/EC – (Regulation) – RIES report – 2022/0396 (COD)**

  Line set out in SI(2024) 208.

- **Establishment of a Head Office Tax system for micro, small and medium sized enterprises, and amendment of Directive 2011/16/EU (Council Directive) – PEREIRA report – 2023/0320 (CNS)**

  Line set out in SP(2024) 265.

- **Transfer pricing (Council Directive) – PETER-HANSEN report – 2023/0322 (CNS)**

  Line set out in SP(2024) 266.

- **Objection pursuant to Article 111 – Commission Delegated Regulation amending Annexes II and III of Regulation (EC) No 853/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on specific hygiene requirements for certain meat, fishery products, dairy products and eggs – 2023/3040 (DEA) – C(2023) 8519**

  Line set out in SP(2024) 267.

- **2022 Discharge (55 reports)**

  Line set out in SP(2024) 269/2.

The Commission approved the line proposed for the following point and took note of the compromise text in its annex:

- **Conservation, management and control measures applicable in the area covered by the Convention on future multilateral cooperation in the**

North-East Atlantic fisheries, amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/1241 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (EC) No 1224/2009, and repeal of Council Regulation (EEC) No 1899/85 and Regulation (EU) No 1236/2010 (Regulation) – GUERREIRO report – 2023/0206 (COD)

Line set out in SP(2024) 252.

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

– **Commission replies to the legislative resolutions (and list of non-legislative resolutions without formal reply) adopted by the European Parliament at its January 2023 and February II 2024 part-sessions**

Line set out in SP(2024) 270/2.

– **Commission replies to the non-legislative resolutions adopted by the European Parliament at its January I 2024 and February I 2024 part-sessions**

Line set out in SP(2024) 271/3.

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

– **Follow-up to opinions of the Economic and Social Committee – Plenary session of December 2023**

Line set out in SC(2024) 11/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

– **‘*Migration and Asylum package*’ – Introduction of a screening of third-country nationals at the external borders and amendment of**

Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817 (Regulation) – SIPPEL report – 2020/0278 (COD)

Compromise text in SP(2024) 229, further to note SI(2024) 62 already approved by the Commission on 6 February 2024.

– **'*Migration and Asylum package*' – Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/816 establishing a centralised system for the identification of Member States holding conviction information on third-country nationals and stateless persons (ECRIS-TCN) to supplement the European Criminal Records Information System and Regulation (EU) 2019/818 on establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration and amendment of Regulations (EU) 2018/1726, (EU) 2018/1862 and (EU) 2019/816 for the purpose of introducing a screening of third-country nationals at the external border (Regulation) – SIPPEL report – 2021/0046 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 230, further to note SI(2024) 62 already approved by the Commission on 6 February 2024.

– **'*Migration and Asylum package*' – Common procedure for international protection in the Union and repeal of Directive 2013/32/EU (Regulation) – KELLER report – 2016/0224A (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 231, further to note SI(2024) 59 already approved by the Commission on 6 February 2024.

– **'*Migration and Asylum package*' – Return procedure and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2021/1148 (Regulation) – KELLER report – 2016/0224B (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 232, further to note SI(2024) 59 already approved by the Commission on 6 February 2024.

– ‘***Migration and Asylum package***’ **– Asylum and migration management and amendment of Council Directive (EC) 2003/109 and the proposed Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Asylum and Migration Fund] (Regulation) – TOBÉ report – 2020/0279 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 233, further to note SI(2024) 60 already approved by the Commission on 6 February 2024.

– ‘***Migration and Asylum package***’ **– Situations of crisis and *force majeure* in the field of migration and asylum (Regulation) – LÓPEZ AGUILAR report – 2020/0277 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 234, further to note SI(2024) 61 already approved by the Commission on 6 February 2024.

– ‘***Migration and Asylum package***’ **– Establishment of 'Eurodac' for the comparison of biometric data for the effective application of Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management] and of Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Resettlement Regulation], for identifying an illegally staying third-country national or stateless person and on requests for the comparison with Eurodac data by Member States' law enforcement authorities and Europol for law enforcement purposes and amendment of Regulations (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/818 (Regulation) – BUXADÉ VILLALBA report – 2016/0132 (COD) as amended by COM(2020) 614**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 235, further to note SI(2024) 63 already approved by the Commission on 6 February 2024.

– ‘***Migration and Asylum package***’ **– Establishment of a Union Resettlement Framework and amendment of Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and the Council (Regulation) – BJÖRK report – 2016/0225 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 236, further to note SI(2022) 526 already approved by the Commission by written procedure on 21 December 2022.

– **‘*Migration and Asylum package*’ – Standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection and for the content of the protection granted and amendment of Council Directive 2003/109/EC of 25 November 2003 concerning the status of third-country nationals who are long-term residents (Regulation) – NEMEC report – 2016/0223 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 237, further to note SI(2022) 525/2 already approved by the Commission by written procedure on 21 December 2022.

– **‘*Migration and Asylum package*’ – Standards for the reception of applicants for international protection (recast of Directive 2013/33/EU) (Directive) – IN 'T VELD report – 2016/0222 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 238, further to note SI(2022) 514/2 already approved by the Commission by written procedure on 21 December 2022.

– **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2021/1232 on a temporary derogation from certain provisions of Directive 2002/58/EC for the purpose of combating online child sexual abuse (Regulation) – SIPPEL report – 2023/0452 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 261, further to note SI(2024) 118 already approved by the Commission on 21 February 2024.

– **‘*Pharmaceuticals package*’ – Union code relating to medicinal products for human use, and repeal of Directive 2001/83/EC and Directive 2009/35/EC (Directive) – WEISS report – 2023/0132 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2024) 239.

– **‘*Pharmaceuticals package*’ – Union procedures for the authorisation and**

supervision of medicinal products for human use and establishing rules governing the European Medicines Agency, amendment of Regulation (EC) No 1394/2007 and Regulation (EU) No 536/2014 and repeal of Regulation (EC) No 726/2004, Regulation (EC) No 141/2000 and Regulation (EC) No 1901/2006 (Regulation) – WÖLKEN report – 2023/0131 (COD)

Information set out in SP(2024) 240.

– **'*Reform of the energy and electricity markets*' – Internal markets for renewable and natural gases and for hydrogen (recast – Regulation) – BUZEK report – 2021/0424 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 241, further to note SI(2023) 571 already approved by the Commission by written procedure on 19 December 2023.

– **'*Reform of the energy and electricity markets*' – Common rules for the internal markets in renewable and natural gases and in hydrogen (Directive) – GEIER report – 2021/0425 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 242, further to note SI(2023) 571 already approved by the Commission by written procedure on 19 December 2023.

– **'*Reform of the energy and electricity markets*': Amendment of Regulations (EU) 2019/943 and (EU) 2019/942 as well as Directives (EU) 2018/2001 and (EU) 2019/944 to improve the Union's electricity market design (Regulation) – GONZÁLEZ CASARES report – 2023/0077B (COD) & 2023/0077A (COD)**

Compromise texts in SP(2024) 245, further to note SI(2024) 4/2 already approved by the Commission on 10 January 2024.

– **'*Fit for 55*' – Methane emissions reduction in the energy sector and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/942 (Regulation) – CANFIN & PAULUS (ex-SARDONE) report – 2021/0423 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 246, further to note SI(2023) 491 already approved by the Commission on 29 November 2023.

– **Additional procedural rules relating to the enforcement of Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (Regulation) – LAGODINSKY report – 2023/0202 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2024) 247.

– **Standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation, and deletion of Article 20 of Directive 2006/54/EC and Article 11 of Directive 2010/41/EU (Directive) – PIETIKÄINEN & ANGEL report – 2022/0400 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 248, further to note SI(2023) 537 already approved by the Commission by written procedure on 19 December 2023.

– **Soil Monitoring and Resilience (Soil Monitoring Law) (Directive) – HOJSÍK report – 2023/0232 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2024) 249.

– **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2017/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on mercury as regards dental amalgam and other mercury-added products subject to manufacturing, import and export restrictions (Regulation) – MORTLER report – 2023/0272 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 250, further to note SI(2024) 115 already approved by the Commission on 21 February 2024.

– **Urban wastewater treatment (recast – Directive) – TORVALDS report – 2022/0345 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 251, further to note SI(2024) 72 already approved by the Commission on 6 February 2024.

– **Accounting of greenhouse gas emissions of transport services (Regulation) – THALER & CANFIN report – 2023/0266 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2024) 253.

– **Amendment of Directive 2009/18/EC establishing the fundamental principles governing the investigation of accidents in the maritime transport sector (Directive) – NAGTEGAAL report – 2023/0164 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 254, further to note SI(2024) 137 already approved by the Commission on 27 February 2024.

– **Amendment of Directive 2009/16/EC on port state control (Directive) – TAX report – 2023/0165 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 255, further to note SI(2024) 162 already approved by the Commission on 12 March 2024.

– **Amendment of Directive 2005/35/EC on ship-source pollution and on the introduction of penalties, including criminal penalties, for pollution offences (Directive) – MARINESCU report – 2023/0171 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 256, further to note SI(2024) 138 already approved by the Commission on 27 February 2024.

– **Amendment of Directive 2009/21/EC on compliance with flag state requirements (Directive) – TAX report – 2023/0172 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 257, further to note SI(2024) 163 already approved by the Commission on 12 March 2024.

– **Laying down harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products, amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and repeal of Regulation (EU) 305/2011 (Regulation) – DOLESCHAL report – 2022/0094 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 258, further to note SI(2024) 9 already approved by the Commission on 24 January 2024.

– **Amendment of Directive 2013/34/EU as regards the time limits for the adoption of sustainability reporting standards for certain sectors and for certain third-country undertakings (Decision) – VOSS report – 2023/0368 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 259, further to note SI(2024) 106 already approved by the Commission on 14 February 2024.

– **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/1242 as regards strengthening the CO_2 emission performance standards for new heavy-duty vehicles and integrating reporting obligations, and repeal of Regulation (EU) 2018/956 (Regulation) – EICKHOUT (ex-JADOT) report – 2023/0042 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 260, further to notes SI(2024) 44 and SI(2024) 134 already approved by the Commission respectively on 6 and 27 February 2024.

– **Establishment of a Union certification framework for carbon removals (Regulation) – PEREIRA report – 2022/0394 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 262, further to note SI(2024) 146 already approved by the Commission on 5 March 2024.

– **Amendment of Council Directives 2001/110/EC relating to honey, 2001/112/EC relating to fruit juices and certain similar products intended for human consumption, 2001/113/EC relating to fruit jams, jellies and marmalades and sweetened chestnut purée intended for human consumption, and 2001/114/EC relating to certain partly or wholly dehydrated preserved milk for human consumption (Directive) – BERNHUBER report – 2023/0105 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 263, further to note SI(2024) 82 already approved by the Commission on 14 February 2024.

– **Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 691/2011 as regards introducing new environmental economic accounts modules (Regulation) – CANFIN report – 2022/0210 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 264, further to notes SI(2023) 581, already approved by the Commission by written procedure on 19 December 2023, and SI(2024) 75 already approved by the Commission on 6 February 2024.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2024) 105 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 25 March and 7 April 2024.

5.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2024) 106 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 25 March and 7 April 2024.

5.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2024) 107 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 25 March and 7 April 2024 archived in D*e*cide.

5.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2024) 108 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 8 and 12 April 2024.

5.5. GRANTING OF AN AD HOC EMPOWERMENT TO THE MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION RESPONSIBLE FOR COMPETITION, WITH A VIEW TO ADOPTING, IN AGREEMENT WITH THE PRESIDENT AND THE MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION RESPONSIBLE FOR THE INTERNAL MARKET, A SPECIFIC DECISION UNDER ARTICLE 14(3) OF REGULATION (EU) 2022/2560 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON FOREIGN SUBSIDIES DISTORTING THE INTERNAL MARKET (C(2024)2388)

The Commission decided to grant Ms VESTAGER, the Member of the Commission responsible for competition, an ad hoc empowerment with a view to adopting, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr BRETON, Member of the Commission responsible for the internal market, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, a specific decision under Article 14(3) of Regulation (EU) 2022/2560 of the European Parliament and of the Council on foreign subsidies distorting the internal market, subject to the conditions set out in Articles 2 and 3 of that decision.

The Commission adopted the Decision in C(2024) 2388.

6. THE FUTURE OF THE SINGLE MARKET

The PRESIDENT gave a warm welcome to the Italian statesman and former Prime Minister Professor Enrico LETTA, so that an exchange of views could take place within the College on the draft report on the future of the single market that he had written. This report would be presented to the Heads of State or Government at the extraordinary European Council of 17 and 18 April 2024.

She stressed that the single market had played a key role in dealing with the successive crises that had hit the EU and made a major contribution to the EU economy, estimated to be around 9% of EU gross domestic product (GDP) each year. As a result of further integration, the single market could generate up to EUR 700 billion a year more by the end of the decade. In this context, Mr LETTA's report arrived at a very timely moment in the political debate on the future of the EU. The PRESIDENT gave him the floor to present the College with an overview of the main conclusions drawn at this stage.

Mr LETTA explained that, on his many visits in all the EU Member States, he had been able to note the challenges posed by the remaining national barriers in the single market and identify the efforts that were still needed to overcome these cross-border obstacles and strengthen links between European citizens. His report had been influenced by the ambitious programme presented by Mr Jacques DELORS in 1985 to develop the full potential of the single market.

At that time, the Member States had insisted on maintaining exclusive competence in three areas: energy, telecommunications and finance. He considered that it was precisely these three areas that had to be targeted in order to develop their European dimension. His discussions with representatives of the Member States and civil society had highlighted the complexities of these areas and the need to strike a balance between the benefits to be achieved in the long term and the sacrifices needed in the short term to create a single market for energy, telecommunications and capital.

As regards finance, Mr LETTA planned to include concrete proposals on how to complete the Capital Markets Union in his report. Discussions on this topic had been going on for years. In this respect, the successful integration of financial services into the single market would depend in particular on the proposals being aligned with objectives that were generally considered by the public to be beneficial and a priority.

In this connection, Mr LETTA proposed focusing on three priority areas by providing more funding to common goals: (i) the green transition, which needed additional investment of around EUR 500 billion a year; (ii) enlargement, when the EU would have to finance the integration of new Member States while at the same time continue to support the development of existing Member States, and (iii) defence, which he wanted to see integrated as an industrial sector of the single market, so that the EU could react according to its geostrategic priorities. He also emphasised the need to add a fifth freedom to the single market's four freedoms – one based on intangible assets, namely innovation, knowledge, data and skills.

He then thanked Mr Mario Draghi, who was drafting the report on the EU's future competitiveness, and the Commission departments, for their fruitful cooperation. He also valued the significant contribution made by the citizens' panels that had come out of the Conference on the Future of Europe. Numerous concerns had been raised on the ground regarding the fragmented enforcement of legislation, red tape and the over-regulation of the single market. This was an area where the Commission still needed to make further progress. He also brought up the calls made by many businessmen and women for a European Inflation Reduction Act similar to that of the US, which he considered would involve the introduction of an EU taxation system.

Lastly, Mr LETTA stressed that his report was intended to enhance the debate on the single market, so that its advantages could be felt not only by people travelling across Europe but also by those who chose to remain in their country of origin. To this end, he called on the EU to launch new flagship initiatives, as had been done during the current Commission's term of office, and to give thought to the future of key policies, such as cohesion policy, and to demographic and geopolitical challenges. He underlined how important it was to address the future of the single market in a creative way in order to bring about innovation in a constantly and rapidly changing world.

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

– appreciation for Mr LETTA's presentation, in advance of the publication of his report, and for his preferred inclusive approach, taking all stakeholders – including the citizens' panels – into account;

– the highlighting of the new dimension of the single market linked to geopolitics, resilience and the competitiveness of the EU economy, and the need to strike a balance between making State aid rules more flexible and maintaining a level playing field;

– the need to look beyond State aid and initiate more joint actions at EU level, such as creating a central fiscal capacity, while minimising the risks for Member States;

– the opportunity to emphasise in the report the aspects of the single market related to the provision of cross-border services, the interoperability of European defence systems and the use of the Recovery and Resilience Facility funds to offset the effects of tax credits;

– the importance of applying the same competition rules to all companies wishing to work in the single market, regardless of whether or not they were European, e.g. by taking inspiration from the rules on privacy protection and the digital single market;

– a reminder that the building of a single market for energy had been speeded up following the energy crisis of summer 2022 caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, through several initiatives taken at European level;

- in this context, the potential of the single market to lower energy prices through accelerated deployments of local renewables, research cooperation and the development of energy infrastructure;
- the necessary energy-related investments, which could be supported by the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) and through Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEI);
- as regards telecommunications, the need to reflect, at European level, on Member States' cooperation on national infrastructure, rules and licences, including through a future European law on digital networks;
- the current dichotomy between the existence of common European consumer policy rules and the lack of uniformity in the application of these rules by national authorities, underlining the need for greater European capacity for action;
- the need to complete the Banking Union by establishing a European deposit insurance scheme to complement the single supervisory and resolution mechanisms, in order to better manage risks at European level;
- the opportunity to follow up Mr LETTA's report with a strong political impetus on the integration of financial markets, with a view to the swift adoption by the co-legislators of the Commission's various proposals on the Banking Union and the Capital Markets Union;
- the importance of ensuring that the benefits of the single market were shared fairly across the EU by also adapting the regulatory framework to demographic change, so that no one was left behind;
- the need to strengthen trust between the various actors in the single market, in particular through a more efficient use of the EU budget and continuous improvements to the quality of institutions and the civil service;

- the integration of the defence industry into the single market with a view to unifying currently fragmented European value chains;

- the desirability of reducing and simplifying single market regulation, while at the same time increasing the capacity of both the Commission and the Member States to implement the rules;

- the observation that the use of the term ‘cross-border’ in discussions on the single market put an emphasis on borders and therefore posed a risk of accentuating the national dimension;

- the fundamental role of the single market in the green transition, where the EU should maintain its lead by ensuring a uniform application of the legal framework put in place in recent years;

- the need to promote green investments on a level playing field, including through targeted public procurement measures;

- the need to take into account, when drawing up the next Multiannual Financial Framework, the increased needs for investment in transport infrastructure in order to ensure the smooth functioning of the single market, drawing on the model of the Connecting Europe Facility;

- the substantial investment needed in research and innovation to increase the EU’s capacity to produce and upscale new technological solutions;

- the estimated economic benefits of integrating new Member States into the single market, which far exceeded the additional cost to the EU budget of enlargement;

- a reminder of the need for all Member States to comply with the Schengen area rules and the negative impact on free movement within the single market of maintaining border controls within that area.

At the end of the debate, Mr LETTA expressed his appreciation of the quality of the comments and suggestions made. He confirmed his intention to highlight the role of the Schengen area in his report and acknowledged that, as long as the Schengen area was not functioning properly throughout the Union, European citizens would not be treated equally.

He reiterated the fundamental importance, in terms of economic security, of integrating the financial, energy and telecommunications sectors, and of their links with other sectors of the single market. In this regard, he also referred to the complexity of reconciling the different needs of large companies and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by enabling the latter to upscale in order to fully benefit from the single market.

Mr LETTA concluded by saying that his report would serve as a tool for the Commission to use in its ongoing efforts to exploit the potential of the single market and stated that he remained at the Commission’s disposal to explore specific topics further.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr LETTA for his presentation and for his excellent report. She pointed out that, like democracy, the single market should not be taken for granted. Continuous efforts were needed to ensure that all European citizens could benefit from the single market.

In the energy sector, the EU had developed a common energy policy and created a platform for joint gas purchases to address the consequences of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. This European initiative had since gained such momentum that joint gas purchases were now much more numerous and even more commercially attractive than initially expected. In the field of finance, she believed that recent experience had highlighted the urgent need to complete the Capital Markets Union in order to address the need for additional investment in the EU and prevent the flight of capital and relocation of start-ups to other parts of the world. Finally, she reminded the College of the possibilities for Member States to grant State aid in the form of tax credits to European companies.

The Commission took note of this information.

7. 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 – THE CLEAN TRANSITION DIALOGUES – STOCKTAKING – A STRONG EUROPEAN INDUSTRY FOR A SUSTAINABLE EUROPE
(COM(2024) 163 TO /3; RCC(2024) 90)

The PRESIDENT noted that the clean transition dialogues, launched the previous autumn and orchestrated by Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, had begun following completion of the legal framework for the European Green Deal. These discussions with various economic sectors were aimed at clarifying the interpretation of this framework and defining specific measures to be taken by the industrial sectors concerned in order to achieve the climate objectives set for 2030 and 2050.

She welcomed the participants' clear commitment to the EU's climate objectives, and the constructive feedback and practical ideas received regarding their implementation on the ground. Thanks to these dialogues, European industry would be able to play a leading role in the green transition.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ explained that the Communication presented that day took stock of the clean transition dialogues announced by the PRESIDENT in her 2023 State of the Union address. As had been the case for the Val Duchesse Social Partners' Summit and the Antwerp Industrial Summit, the objective of the nine dialogues that had taken place so far had been to strengthen the Commission's engagement with companies and social partners regarding the future of European industry and implementation of the Green Deal.

In his view, the feedback from the dialogues revealed that industrial players remained committed to the EU's climate and biodiversity goals, and showed real enthusiasm for participating in implementation of the Green Deal. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ also highlighted their desire to stay in Europe and to prosper there, influenced by the clear vision, predictability and stability offered by the EU's regulatory framework. These factors were also crucial for attracting global investment.

However, to stimulate such engagement, the decarbonisation of Europe had to be supported not only by objectives and a regulatory framework, but also by market dynamics. He thus stressed the need to strengthen the business case for a clean transition, including for energy-intensive industries.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ then drew attention to six main points frequently raised by industry and social partners during the dialogues.

First, he highlighted the importance of swift application of the agreed rules across the single market. Although a robust regulatory framework was already in place, it was essential to implement the proposals and projects that had already been approved. He referred in this respect to the numerous delegated acts and implementing acts to be adopted by the next Commission in close collaboration with the Member States and industry, to ensure a balanced and reasonable regulatory burden.

Second, he noted that to boost its competitiveness in comparison to other global players, European industry needed sufficient and affordable access to energy. In his view, this required all zero- and low-carbon energy solutions to be taken into consideration and, if necessary, additional targeted measures to be put in place temporarily, in order to bring energy prices down and enable strategic industrial actors to remain in Europe.

Third, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ emphasised the need to accelerate the roll-out of energy and transport infrastructure, especially at regional and local level. Given the obsolescence of the existing infrastructure, it was essential to modernise distribution networks and to encourage energy production from renewable sources.

Fourth, he stressed the importance of developing a real single market for clean technologies in Europe, rewarding companies investing in innovative and sustainable technologies, in particular through public procurement. It was vital to scale up the manufacturing of clean products in Europe; the clean technologies market could be worth EUR 60 billion per year by 2060.

Fifth, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ brought up the funding of the green transition, and reiterated the urgency of finalising the Capital Markets Union in order to mobilise the private investments needed for expanding innovative companies. It was also essential to increase public support for the various clean technology sectors which were not commercially viable at present. He proposed strengthening effective programmes such as the Innovation Fund and InvestEU, and simplifying access to EU funds. In this respect, he welcomed the fact that the European Central Bank (ECB) was working on establishing a funding one-stop-shop.

Sixth, the competitiveness of European industry had to be boosted by ensuring a global level playing field. The EU was the largest exporter of manufactured goods and services, accounting for 16% of global trade, and therefore had to promote fairness in international trade rules to remain a leading player. Finally, global carbon pricing was essential for achieving the EU's climate ambitions and ensuring fair competition.

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

– recognition of the success of the dialogues as a platform for political engagement and collaboration;

- the importance of continuing to collaborate with industry stakeholders and social partners to help them implement the objectives set within the framework of the Green Deal;

- the need for effective use to be made of the information gathered during the dialogues, to ensure that it was taken into account in the development of EU policies;

- a reminder of the tools already put in place by the Commission to respond to the challenges of industrial players, such as the creation of industrial alliances or Important Projects of Common European Interest (IPCEIs);

- the need to resolve the problems affecting EU companies, such as shortages of skilled labour and the excessive administrative burden;

- the importance of cross-cutting financing, and the potential of instruments such as the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) for the EU's international competitiveness.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT considered that the Communication gave an excellent summary of crucial matters to be addressed by the next Commission, in order to respond effectively to the challenges identified, thereby contributing to the success of the Green Deal for Europe and the clean transition.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2024) 163/3 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.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

8.1. APPOINTMENT OF THE EU SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SME) ENVOY

At the request of Members of the College, the PRESIDENT addressed a parliamentary question concerning the appointment of the EU small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) Envoy. She pointed out that Commission replies to parliamentary questions followed a well-established collegiate procedure, and invited Mr HAHN to present the main elements of the proposed reply.

Mr HAHN explained that the decision to appoint the EU small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) Envoy had been taken following a selection procedure that complied fully with Commission rules and practice. There were no legal grounds for reviewing this decision, which was for the Commission to take as an autonomous Institution.

The Commission took note of this information.

8.2. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Mr BORRELL reported on the latest developments in external relations, starting with Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine. In the face of the threat of an imminent Russian advance across current front lines, the EU urgently needed to consider how to accelerate its military support to Ukraine and implement in the fastest way possible the decisions taken by the European Council.

He stressed the necessity of military support to Ukraine, in particular for air defence to protect major cities and industrial sites of strategic importance. The EU was supporting the European defence industry to ramp up production, but producing new equipment also took time. The ammunition shortage remained critical and any initiatives to make greater use of existing stock, place joint orders from EU industry, purchase ammunition that was immediately available on the market or directly support the Ukrainian industry were welcome.

With respect to defence readiness, in line with the European Defence Industrial Strategy approved in March, the Commission had proposed to the Ukrainian Government that the EU co-host the third edition of the Ukraine Defence Industry Forum on 6 May in Brussels. The EU could also help step up production of drones within the EU or jointly with Ukraine.

Lastly, as regards financing, the EU needed to implement the European Council decision to increase the European Peace Facility ceiling by EUR 5 billion. Discussion on using the windfall profits stemming from Russian frozen assets was also progressing and Mr BORRELL hoped that there would be an agreement by the end of June so that this liquidity could be channelled towards military support for Ukraine as quickly as possible. This discussion would also provide an opportunity to explore all options for mobilising funding for the European defence industry, as recently requested by the European Council.

Turning to the situation in the Middle East, Mr BORRELL regretted that the discussions in Egypt in April with a view to achieving a ceasefire and the release of the hostages had not produced results. Although access to humanitarian assistance had recently improved, the humanitarian situation and the extent of destruction in Gaza remained severe. According to the joint UN and World Bank interim damage assessment report published on 2 April, the cost of damage in Gaza came to nearly USD 18.5 billion, equivalent to 97% of the combined GDP of the West Bank and Gaza in 2022.

Reporting on developments in the region, Mr BORRELL mentioned Israel's strike against an annex of the Iranian embassy in Damascus on 1 April. He had had a telephone conversation with the Iranian Foreign

Minister in this connection and had conveyed clear messages regarding the need to avoid escalation in the region. The situation also remained particularly tense in the Red Sea, although the EU's new, strictly defensive, military operation ASPIDES had been effective in repelling Houthi attacks against international shipping, in cooperation with the Prosperity Guardian operation led by the US. Lastly, concerns remained about the risk of escalation at the northern border with Lebanon, despite the willingness on both sides to avoid open confrontation.

Mr BORRELL concluded by referring to the High-Level Geopolitical Dialogue on the previous day, during which he had had the opportunity to meet MEPs and discuss developments in the Middle East, Sahel and Iraq, as well as how the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument cuts were going to be achieved. Regarding the financial cuts, it was important to find suitable common ground soon.

The Commission took note of this information.

8.3. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION, PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'MY VOICE, MY CHOICE – FOR SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE ABORTION' C(2024)2353

Ms JOUROVÁ outlined for the College the request for registration of the European citizens' initiative entitled, in the authentic language (English), 'My Voice, My Choice: For Safe and Accessible Abortion'.

The initiative called on the Commission to submit a legislative proposal for financial support to Member States offering safe pregnancy termination services with a view to ensuring access to safe and legal abortion to anyone in Europe currently lacking such access. According to the organisers of the initiative, the financial support could take the form of an opt-in mechanism open to Member States on a voluntary basis.

The citizens' initiative did not address the question of the legalisation of abortion, which fell outside the EU's powers. Given the specific wording used by the organisers in their request for registration, the Legal Service had found that the initiative could be considered admissible. Ms JOUROVÁ therefore proposed that it should be registered.

The organisers would then be able to start collecting the required number of signatures, i.e. at least one million in seven Member States. The Commission would only need to examine the substance of the initiative after these signatures had been collected.

Following this presentation, the Commission confirmed that the citizens' initiative entitled 'My Voice, My Choice: For Safe and Accessible Abortion' met the conditions for registration. It therefore decided, in accordance with document C(2024) 2353, to inform the group of organisers and authorised Ms JOUROVÁ to sign the reply on behalf of the College, in the authentic language (English), to send it to the initiative's organisers, and to publish it, for information, in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The Commission also agreed to transmit this decision, for information, to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

The Commission took note of this information.

*

*   *

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

*

*   *

The meeting closed at 12.49.