EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2024) 2492 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 12 June 2024

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2492nd meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 15 May 2024

(morning)

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PV(2024) 2492 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic –

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Single sitting: Wednesday 15 May 2024 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.24 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 9.2
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	Items 1 to 9.1
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Ms VĂLEAN	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	
Ms IVANOVA	Member	
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member	

Absent:

Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President
Mr REYNDERS	Member
Ms DALLI	Member
Mr LENARČIČ	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member

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

Mr FREIMANIS	Member of Mr DOMBROVSKIS's cabinet	
Ms ASTERIADI	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians
Ms LOTSON LÓPEZ	Member of Mr BORRELL's cabinet	
Ms GERHARDS	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Ms DALLI	
Ms SIMKIĆ	Head of Cabinet to Mr LENARČIČ	
Ms TEEDUMÄE	Deputy Head of Cabinet to Mr VÁRHELYI	

The following also sat in:

Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians

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 PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr VAN KEMSEKE	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians
Ms REYNERS FONTANA	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Items 9.1 to 9.2

Ms HILI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Items 8 to 9.2
Mr CALACEAN	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Items 9.1 to 9.2
Ms SEMLALI	Policy Assistant in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
His Excellency Willem VAN DE VOORDE, Ambassador	Permanent Representative of Belgium to the European Union	Visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians
His Excellency Machteld FOSTIER, Ambassador	Secretary to Her Majesty the Queen	Visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians
Mr HOUSSIAU	Head of Cabinet to His Majesty the King	Visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians
Mr CRIJNS	Diplomatic Adviser	Visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians
Mr CHARLES	Secretariat-General	

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC, Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General.

VISIT OF THEIR MAJESTIES THE KING AND QUEEN OF THE BELGIANS

At the opening of the meeting, the PRESIDENT welcomed Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians and said that it was a great honour for the Commission to have them attend a meeting of the College. Referring to a recent speech made by His Majesty the King of the Belgians before the European Parliament, she pointed out that Europe was at the heart of the Belgian identity, and that Brussels was the home of all Europeans, as demonstrated by the numerous projects carried out jointly by the Commission and the Belgian authorities in the European quarter.

She then emphasised the great success of the Belgian Presidency of the European Union, during which over 50 legislative files had been concluded in key areas such as net-zero industry, economic governance, support for Ukraine and asylum and migration management. These successes illustrated the EU’s ability to move in the right direction, building on Belgium’s experience and pragmatism to develop solutions acceptable to all.

Welcoming the personal commitment of His Majesty the King of the Belgians to a united Europe, the PRESIDENT stressed that the EU had to rely on its own efforts to make progress, as it had demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic and following the departure of the United Kingdom. She felt that Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine had brought home the need for a united approach among Europeans and the importance of looking to the future with hope.

She also mentioned other challenges at the heart of the Commission’s work, in particular the fight against climate disruption and the strengthening of security in the face of hybrid threats. She highlighted Europe's innovative strength and expressed her confidence in the European Union’s ability to succeed in its green and digital transition, which would need to be both innovative and just, in line with the European social market economy model. Lastly, she pointed out that the EU was at the forefront in the area of health, in particular thanks to the foundations laid during this Commission's term of office and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. A genuine European Health Union was being created and significant progress had been made, particularly in the area of mental health.

The PRESIDENT concluded her introduction by warmly thanking Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians for their visit to the Commission.

His Majesty the King expressed his gratitude to the PRESIDENT and the College for the invitation. He referred to his previous visits to the European Commission and said that, during the Belgian Presidency of the EU, he had also had the honour of attending a European Parliament plenary meeting and of welcoming European leaders to the Royal Palace. This visit to the Commission therefore completed his tour of the three main EU institutions.

He spoke of the great privilege of having had several exchanges with the PRESIDENT over the past few years, praising her hard work and unwavering commitment to democratic values. He also mentioned the upcoming European elections, which he described as the broadest and most diverse in the democratic world. He welcomed the European Union's growing influence on the international stage, attracting an increasing number of countries wishing to join it, a development that not even the EU's founding fathers would have envisaged.

At the same time, he highlighted the emergence of unprecedented threats, including disinformation and foreign interference, and stressed the crucial importance of strengthening democracy in the face of rising authoritarianism and extremism. He concluded by referring to the EU's future competitiveness and questioning its level of preparedness to meet the challenges of the coming years. Although the Commission had made significant progress in many sectors, he pointed out that the world was beset by growing instability and characterised by inward-looking tendencies, including among the major powers.

The PRESIDENT acknowledged that competitiveness would be a major challenge for the Commission’s next term of office and stressed the importance of democracy as the prime asset in an unstable global context. She felt that the EU needed to make progress by showcasing the areas in which it already excelled, for example life expectancy, which was higher in the EU than in other regions such as the United States or China. She

pointed out that only a quarter of that difference was attributable to health factors, while the majority was due to economic and social stability, which provided significant value to European citizens. Moreover, inequality was less marked and social cohesion stronger in the EU.

Nonetheless, the PRESIDENT felt that the European Union still needed to improve in certain areas, such as access to capital. Completion of the Capital Markets Union could unlock investments worth hundreds of billions of euros. She also mentioned Europe's structurally high energy costs, largely due to its long-standing dependence on imported energy. She therefore called for an accelerated shift towards renewable energy, which would be beneficial for the climate, European autonomy, the creation of quality jobs and cost reduction. She addressed the importance of digitalisation and skilled labour, stressing the need to train young people, support work-life balance and promote the silver economy.

The PRESIDENT also suggested that the European Union could improve the level playing field for European companies. She underlined the importance of European standards and competition based on quality, but noted that the EU could not accept highly subsidised products and services from abroad, which created an unfair advantage and threatened the internal market. She considered that if there was no guarantee of a level playing field, the EU needed tools to defend itself. Finally, she argued that rather than being a burden, the transition to clean technologies represented an opportunity to tackle the many competitiveness challenges the EU was facing.

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

– the honour and privilege of having the monarchs visit the Commission, reflecting their commitment to Europe;

– the lack of a panacea in terms of EU competitiveness, which required coordinated action on several fronts, and the scale of the commitment required to implement the necessary reforms, commensurate with that demonstrated

during the pandemic, the energy crisis and in the support for Ukraine against the Russian war of aggression;

– the success of the legislation on foreign subsidies in the European Union;

– the need for trust in the European model and democracy, which produced impressive results, and a reminder that democracy relied on the trust of citizens in its capacity to work for their benefit;

– the dangerous trends amplified by social media, which could reduce trust in democracy and democratic institutions, and the need for a collective effort, particularly in response to deliberate attacks by actors such as Russia, to rehabilitate fact-based truth;

– the Commission's efforts over the last decade to strengthen democracy, protect media freedom, maintain an open and active civil society, and uphold the principles of the rule of law, checks and balances and respect for fundamental rights;

– progress in the digital sphere, including maintaining an open digital market despite attempts by large companies to restrict access for other players, and initiatives to protect children online from targeted advertising, profiling or mental health risks linked to social media addiction;

– in this context, the importance of the next Commission ensuring effective implementation of the existing regulatory framework;

– the drastic change in the security landscape, notably since the terrorist attacks in Brussels in 2016, moving from traditional threats such as terrorism, organised crime and drug trafficking to new hybrid threats targeting EU values, and the relevance of bringing together all aspects of the Security Union under one roof;

– the important contribution that this Commission would leave as a legacy in the field of security, demonstrating the complementarity of the EU's role with that

of the Member States, in particular through the support of European services such as Europol or Frontex for cross-border efforts;

– the careful security management which would be required, in cooperation with the Member States responsible, to ensure the smooth running of international sporting events in Europe such as the Paris Olympic Games and the European Football Championship;

– the growing threat of hate speech, particularly visible since the Hamas attack on Israel, with an increase in online antisemitism being reflected in real life, compromising the physical security of individuals;

– the recognition of mental health as one of the pillars of the European Health Union, with equity as a guiding principle, underlining the fact that physical and mental health are equally essential to citizens' well-being;

– the fact that this was the first time that a comprehensive strategy on mental health had been drawn up by the Commission, highlighting the importance for the Member States of prioritising this issue;

– the challenge of stigmatisation and discrimination relating to mental health, often still perceived as taboo, and the contribution of the guidance provided by the Commission to the Member States to tackle these phenomena effectively;

– the lack of an alternative to climate action, supported by a broad body of scientific evidence;

– the need to broaden the scope of climate policies by integrating them with competitiveness to keep businesses and commercial stakeholders within the EU, ensure a fair transition, and mobilise the rest of the world;

– a reminder that 93% of CO_2 emissions were produced outside the EU, necessitating not only the continued reduction of the 7% for which Europe was

responsible, but also the adoption of more assertive global climate diplomacy; climate change was indiscriminate as regards the origin of emissions;

– the need for a long-term perspective to tackle climate change, requiring sustained efforts by the EU and the entire world in the coming decades.

Her Majesty the Queen of the Belgians took the floor to underline the importance of pursuing the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and of fully engaging with the 2030 Agenda to prepare a better future for the EU and for next generations. She welcomed the fruitful collaboration with the Commission, and in particular with Ms KYRIAKIDES on issues relating to health, including mental health. In this regard, she stressed the importance of improving prevention policies in the Member States, particularly for young people and the elderly. Finally, she emphasised the need for improved access to high-quality education, which was crucial for the future of the European Union.

The PRESIDENT concluded with a mention of discrimination in the field of mental health, which was often exacerbated by ignorance regarding the mechanisms underlying certain diseases. The lack of clear physical explanations sometimes led to those affected being blamed for their problems, hence the importance of a better understanding of the determinants of mental health. Lastly, she pointed out that, despite the many challenges facing the EU, it was impressive to see the positive changes brought about and the significant impact of the Commission’s work for the benefit of European citizens.

1. AGENDAS
(OJ(2024) 2492/FINAL; SEC(2024) 2492/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) 2492)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 13 May 2024.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2489th, 2490th and 2491st meetings of 10, 17 and 23 April 2024 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(RCC(2024) 101)

The Commission took note of the outcome of the written exchange concerning the GRI files from 6 to 8 May (RCC(2024) 101).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

– **Joint proposal amending Council Regulation (EU) 833/2014 (Council Regulation) – 2024/0080 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 230.

– **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2016/399 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Regulation) – GUILLAUME report – 2021/0428 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 232.

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

– **Commission replies to the non-legislative resolutions adopted by the European Parliament at its part-session of March 2024**

Line set out in SP(2024) 382/2.

– **Commission replies to the legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its part-session of April I 2024**

Line set out in SP(2024) 377/3.

The Commission took note of the following points:

– **Safety of toys and repeal of Directive 2009/48/EC (Regulation) – WALSMANN report – 2023/0290 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2024) 233.

– **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD): annual meeting 2024**

Information set out in SPI(2024) 21.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2024) 18; RCC(2024) 19; RCC(2024) 20)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2024) 18, RCC(2024) 19 and RCC(2024) 20 of the meetings of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 24 April, Thursday 2 May and Wednesday 8 May 2024.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2024) 125 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 22 April and 12 May 2024.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2024) 126 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 22 April and 12 May 2024.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2024) 127 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 22 April and 12 May 2024, as archived in D*e*cide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2024) 128 TO /3)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 29 April and 17 May 2024.

6.5. COMMISSION DECISION GRANTING A DELEGATION OF POWERS RELATING TO THE PUBLICATION IN THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION OF REFERENCES OF EUROPEAN ASSESSMENT DOCUMENTS FOR CERTAIN CONSTRUCTION PRODUCTS
(C(2024) 3233)

The Commission decided to grant a delegation of powers to the Director-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs to adopt – on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, in accordance with Article 22 of Regulation (EU) No 305/2011 – implementing decisions as regards the publication of references of final European assessment documents for certain construction products in the Official Journal of the European Union, subject to the conditions laid down in Articles 2 to 5 of the Decision.

The Commission adopted the Decision in C(2024) 3233.

6.6. COMMISSION DECISION GRANTING A DELEGATION OF POWERS RELATING TO THE APPROVAL OF FUNDING UNDER THE RESEARCH FUND FOR COAL AND STEEL
(C(2024) 3232)

The Commission decided to grant a delegation of powers to the Director-General for Research and Innovation to adopt – on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, in accordance with Article 41(a) of Decision 2008/376/EC – decisions on the approval of the funding actions in respect of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, where the estimated amount of the Union contribution under the Research Programme was equal to or more than EUR 0.6 million, subject to

the conditions laid down in Articles 3 to 6 of the Decision.

The Commission adopted the Decision in C(2024) 3232.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2024) 129)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2024) 40)

7.1. DG DIGITAL SERVICES – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2023) 87 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 'Cybersecurity service for the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies' Directorate in DG Digital Services (PERS(2023) 87 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 15 March and 21 March 2024 (PERS(2023) 87/3 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 Mr Saad KADHI to the post.

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

7.2. DG ENERGY – AUTHORISATION TO APPOINT THE ACCOUNTANT OF THE EURATOM SUPPLY AGENCY (ESA)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms SIMSON, the Commission decided to authorise the Member of the Commission responsible for energy – by way of derogation from Annex 1 to Commission Decision C(2021) 9126 – to appoint the accountant of the Euratom Supply Agency.

This decision would take effect immediately.

7.3. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – EXTENSION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTE FOR GENDER EQUALITY (EIGE)

In agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms DALLI, the Commission decided:

- to propose to the EIGE Management Board to extend the term of office of Ms Carlien SCHEELE as Director for a period of five years, with effect from 1 February 2025, in accordance with Article 12(2) of Regulation (EC) 1922/2006;

- to ask Ms DALLI, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this decision to the EIGE Management Board.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.4. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – AGREEMENT FOR A TRANSFER IN THE INTEREST OF THE SERVICE TO FILL THE POST OF HEAD OF EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION IN MADAGASCAR

The Commission, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided to approve the transfer, in the interest of the service, of Mr Roland KOBIA to fill the post of Head of European Union Delegation in Madagascar.

On this basis, the final decision on the transfer would be taken by the competent authority of the European External Action Service.

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

7.5. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – 2023 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE CORPORATE MANAGEMENT BOARD
(SEC(2024) 152)

The Commission took note of the 2023 annual report of the Corporate Management Board in SEC(2024) 152.

8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL ON THE SEVENTH PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU SECURITY UNION STRATEGY
(COM(2024) 198 AND /3; RCC(2024) 102)

Mr SCHINAS presented the seventh progress report on the implementation of the EU Security Union Strategy, covering the period 2020-2025. He thanked all the departments concerned for their work on the different aspects of the strategy, pointing out the efforts to break down silos that this had necessitated. He welcomed the fact that the Security Union, which brought all these aspects together under one roof, allowed the Commission to project a more tangible and visible approach to security and adapt the EU's instruments to new threats, whether physical or digital.

He noted that the report summarised all the work on the Security Union and showed that the EU knew how to respond to the emerging landscape, especially cyber threats. He mentioned key initiatives in this regard, such as the Cyber Resilience Act, the Cyber Solidarity Act and the critical infrastructure regulatory framework, including the security of submarine cables. With regard to the internal affairs part of

the Security Union, efforts had focused on the fight against organised crime and drug trafficking, which had been identified as major threats to EU security.

Mr SCHINAS drew two political lessons from the report: (i) the need to maintain unity of action on security, by delivering European solutions for the Member States' security challenges, and (ii) the importance of caution in order to ensure the safe and secure organisation of the high-profile events due to take place in Europe that year.

Ms JOHANSSON provided an overview of the internal affairs aspects of EU security set out in the report. In this context, organised crime had become a growing threat, comparable to that of terrorism. She pointed out that, in October 2023, the Commission had put in place an EU roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime. An inventory of the most powerful organised crime groups had identified more than 800 groups, half of which were involved in drug trafficking and which were also responsible for over half of the murders in the EU. She stressed that 86% of these groups were also involved in the legal economy, which posed a considerable threat to the resilience of European society.

In this connection, she explained that many measures were being taken by the national authorities, with support from Europol, and that cooperation in the fight against organised crime would be stepped up. In addition, the Commission had proposed a new anti-corruption regulation and had launched a police cooperation initiative with the countries of Latin America.

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

– full support for the report as a summary of EU security actions and trends;

– the identification of several emerging aspects that were likely to be relevant for a future joint EU security programme, such as spyware, the misuse of personal data, certain Member States issuing golden passports, the use of new artificial intelligence (AI) technology, and lobbying contracts.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2024) 198/3 for transmission to the European Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1. DISINFORMATION AND FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN THE RUN-UP TO THE ELECTIONS (INFO(2024) 15)

Ms JOUROVÁ raised the issue of disinformation and foreign interference, highlighting the use of this hybrid threat by certain third countries as an integral part of their war strategy.

She stressed the need to define this problem precisely, clarifying that the issue was not mere differences of opinion but rather false or misleading content that is spread with the intention to deceive and aims to secure political or economic gains that could cause public harm. The dissemination of fake news during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the dangers of this phenomenon. In this context, she called for a measured but firm response which would clearly distinguish freedom of expression from information manipulation.

Ms JOUROVÁ explained that digital manipulation, including the use of fake accounts, fake bots and deep fakes, did not fall within the scope of freedom of expression and had to be regulated. In this regard, she highlighted the tools already in place at European level, such as the European External Action Service's Rapid Alert System and the Digital Services Act (DSA), which facilitated cooperation between national authorities. She also mentioned the central role of the Code of Practice on Disinformation, which had more than 40 signatories. She stressed that these measures were an integral part of a long-term strategy aimed at tackling disinformation effectively, as well as the

need for effective implementation of these tools.

Ms JOUROVÁ drew attention to the increased vulnerability of the European Union to disinformation in this pre-election period, and to the need for adequate preparation by the Member States. The EU did, however, have sophisticated means with which to address this threat, as demonstrated by the rapid mobilisation of the Integrated Political Crisis Response (IPCR) mechanism following the revelations concerning Voice of Europe. It was important to foster synergy in the implementation of existing tools and the European Commission had a crucial role to play in this regard. She also referred to the possible creation of a 'European democratic shield', mentioned by the PRESIDENT, to protect the EU from foreign interference.

She also noted that the focus of disinformation was often on amplifying existing divisions, for example with regard to climate and migration policies, using tools such as artificial intelligence and cyber-attacks. Some topics were specific to individual Member States, but recurring topics included Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, climate change, the situation in the Middle East, public health, vaccines, and topics related to elections.

Ms JOUROVÁ stressed the need to strengthen the resilience of the population to disinformation, in particular through active communication on the subject. Vulnerabilities varied from one Member State to another, making it vital to have an educational and awareness-raising approach tailored to each context. She emphasised the essential role of the media, in particular public media, in fact-checking and explaining disinformation mechanisms in order to improve public information. She also mentioned the role of civil society, academia, electoral and data protection authorities and expressed her hope that entities such as the European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO) would be strengthened in the future. Finally, she highlighted the contribution of law enforcement and judicial authorities in the implementation of the existing rules and stressed the need to provide them with the necessary resources to

carry out their tasks effectively.

She concluded her presentation by encouraging the Members of the College to actively contribute to the information space in the form of proven facts in order to burst information bubbles and educate citizens on the nature of disinformation. She highlighted the resources and information available for this purpose, including through the support provided by the Directorate-General for Communication, the Joint Research Centre and the researchers of the European Digital Media Observatory.

The PRESIDENT thanked Ms JOUROVÁ for her detailed presentation, stressing the importance of the topic of disinformation for the European Union. She noted that this threat was an attempt by autocracies to target democratic powers around the world. In order to address these challenges, she called for stronger European coordination and a global vision to enable Europe to stay at the forefront of rapid technological developments.

Following the presentation, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2024)198/3 for transmission to the European Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

The Commission took note of this information and of the note distributed as INFO(2024) 15.

9.2. WITHDRAWAL OF THE REASONED PROPOSAL UNDER ARTICLE 7(1) TEU PROCEDURE CONCERNING POLAND

Ms JOUROVÁ informed the Members of the College of an important step in the procedure under Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU) with regard to Poland.

On 6 May the College had authorised her, by written procedure, to formally inform the Council of the Commission's intention to withdraw the reasoned proposal which had triggered the procedure for applying Article 7. That

decision was based on the Commission's assessment that there was currently no clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law in Poland, so that the conditions for maintaining the Article 7 procedure were no longer met. In a spirit of cooperation, the PRESIDENT had also sent a letter to Parliament informing it of these developments.

Ms JOUROVÁ briefly summarised the circumstances leading to the application of Article 7 TEU to Poland, the current assessment and the next steps envisaged. In particular, she noted that, on 20 December 2017, the Commission had identified a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law in Poland and had therefore proposed to the Council that it adopt a decision under Article 7(1) TEU determining that such a clear risk existed. The procedure in question had therefore been launched, with several hearings of senior Polish officials and a thorough review.

Significant progress had been made since then, in particular Poland's clear statement of intent to address the issues raised in the Commission's reasoned proposal. On 20 February 2024, the Polish Government had presented to the General Affairs Council an action plan to address the Commission's concerns regarding the rule of law and judicial independence. Poland's explicit acknowledgement that there were shortcomings in the rule of law that needed to be addressed, the adoption of a clear programme in the form of the action plan and the fact that the first concrete steps had been taken to implement that plan were directly relevant to the Commission's assessment.

Ms JOUROVÁ also noted that the Polish Government had recognised the primacy of European law and had undertaken to fully implement the judgments of the Court of Justice of the European Union on judicial independence. She stressed that this assessment did not mean that the Commission would stop monitoring the rule of law situation in Poland. As for all Member States, the entire rule of law toolbox would remain in place and monitoring would continue, including through the annual Rule of Law Report.

She had asked the Council to make any observations it deemed appropriate, for example in the form of a Council statement or a letter from the Presidency. The subject would be discussed at the next meeting of the General Affairs Council on 21 May, at which Ms JOUROVÁ would have the opportunity to explain further the Commission's reasoning. Finally, she said that the Commission would withdraw its reasoned proposal after receiving the Council's reaction.

She felt that this was an important step, pointing out that it was the first and only time when the Commission itself had initiated the Article 7 TEU procedure against a Member State. She also reaffirmed the Commission's continued commitment to supporting the Polish authorities in the implementation of their action plan.

Ms JOUROVÁ concluded by stressing the political challenges that still existed in Poland and pointing out that not all the issues would be resolved in the short term. Nevertheless, she felt that now that Poland was firmly on the path to addressing these concerns, there was no longer a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law at this stage.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 10.55.