



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

**PV(2024) 2497 final**

*- English translation of the French version which is authentic -*

Brussels, 11 September 2024

# TEXTE EN

## MINUTES

of the 2497<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 26 June 2024

(morning)

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**Single sitting: Wednesday 26 June 2024 (morning)**

The sitting opened at 9.12 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

**Present:**

|                        |                                      |                   |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Ms von der LEYEN       | President                            |                   |
| Ms VESTAGER            | Executive Vice-President             |                   |
| Mr DOMBROVSKIS         | Executive Vice-President             |                   |
| Mr ŠEFČOVIČ            | Executive Vice-President             |                   |
| Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES | High Representative / Vice-President |                   |
| Ms JOUROVÁ             | Vice-President                       |                   |
| Ms ŠUICA               | Vice-President                       |                   |
| Mr SCHINAS             | Vice-President                       |                   |
| Mr HAHN                | Member                               |                   |
| Mr SCHMIT              | Member                               |                   |
| Mr GENTILONI           | Member                               |                   |
| Mr BRETON              | Member                               |                   |
| Ms FERREIRA            | Member                               |                   |
| Ms KYRIAKIDES          | Member                               |                   |
| Ms JOHANSSON           | Member                               |                   |
| Mr LENARČIČ            | Member                               |                   |
| Ms VÁLEAN              | Member                               |                   |
| Mr VÁRHELYI            | Member                               |                   |
| Ms URPILAINEN          | Member                               |                   |
| Ms SIMSON              | Member                               | Item 10 (in part) |
| Mr SINKEVIČIUS         | Member                               |                   |
| Ms McGUINNESS          | Member                               |                   |
| Mr HOEKSTRA            | Member                               |                   |

Absent:

|                  |        |
|------------------|--------|
| Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI | Member |
| Mr REYNDERS      | Member |
| Ms DALLI         | Member |
| Ms IVANOVA       | Member |

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

|               |                                      |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| Ms HAAPANIEMI | Member of Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI's cabinet |
| Mr KERR       | Member of Ms DALLI's cabinet         |
| Mr SCHULTE    | Head of Cabinet to Ms IVANOVA        |

The following also sat in:

|                    |                                                                        |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mr SEIBERT         | Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT                                       |
| Mr CALLEJA CRESPO  | Director-General, Legal Service                                        |
| Ms SPINANT         | Director-General, DG Communication                                     |
| Ms PODESTA         | Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission                            |
| Ms PETKOVA         | Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's cabinet |
| Mr TAQUET-GRAZIANI | Acting Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General                         |
| Ms BUKA            | Secretariat-General                                                    |

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

**1. AGENDAS**

**(OJ(2024) 2497/FINAL; SEC(2024) 2497/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) 2497)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Tuesday 25 June 2024.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2493<sup>rd</sup>, 2494<sup>th</sup>, 2495<sup>th</sup> and 2496<sup>th</sup> meetings of 22 and 29 May, and 12 and 19 June 2024 for a later date.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS**

**(RCC(2024) 116)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on 21 June 2024 (RCC(2024) 116).

The Commission approved the line proposed for the following point:

- **Draft Commission reply to the Contribution of the LXXI<sup>st</sup> plenary session of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC), Brussels, 24 to 26 March 2024**

Line set out in SNP(2024) 9/2.

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 part-sessions of November II 2023, April I and April II 2024.**

Line set out in SP(2024) 414/4.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques and their food and feed, and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 (Regulation) – POLFJÄRD report – 2023/0226 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2024) 287.

- **Compulsory licensing for crisis management and amendment of Regulation (EC) 816/2006 (Regulation) – VÁZQUEZ LÁZARA report – 2023/0129 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2024) 288.

- **Enhancement of police cooperation in relation to the prevention, detection and investigation of migrant smuggling and trafficking in human beings, enhancement of Europol's support to preventing and combating such crimes and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2016/794 (Regulation) – LENAERS report – 2023/0438 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2024) 290.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION  
(RCC(2024) 26)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2024) 26 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 19 June 2024.

**6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS**

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED  
(SEC(2024) 171 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 17 and 23 June 2024.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT  
(SEC(2024) 172 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 17 and 23 June 2024.

**6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS  
(SEC(2024) 173 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 17 and 23 June 2024 archived in Decide.

**6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES  
(SEC(2024) 174 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 24 and 28 June 2024.

## **7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS**

**(SEC(2024) 175 AND /2)**

### **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

**(PERS(2024) 48 AND /2)**

#### **7.1. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15**

**(PERS(2024) 49 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 ‘Public Health, Cancer and Health Security’ Directorate in DG Health and Food Safety (PERS(2024) 49).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 14 March and 25 April 2024 (PERS(2024) 49/2 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 Antonio PARENTI to the post.

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

#### **7.2. DG FINANCIAL STABILITY, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CAPITAL MARKETS UNION – APPOINTMENT OF AN INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR THE EUROPEAN AUTHORITY FOR ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING AND COUNTERING THE FINANCING OF TERRORISM (AMLA/ALBC)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms McGUINNESS, the Commission decided to appoint Mr Olivier SALLES – currently an AD14 official and Head of the ‘Anti-Money Laundering’ Unit in DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union – as interim Executive Director of the European Authority for Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism. He would fulfil this role in addition to his current role, until the Executive Director of the European Authority for Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism was appointed.

This decision would take effect immediately, subject to the availability of the corresponding budget resources.

**7.3. REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD – EXTENSION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF A MEMBER OF THE REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, the Commission decided, under Article 3(4) of the President’s Decision (P(2020) 2), to extend for one year the term of office of Mr James MORRISON, currently a Member of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board (RSB).

This decision would take effect on 1 July 2024.

**7.4. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POSTS OF HEADS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATIONS TO MALI AND THE GAMBIA, AT GRADE AD9/14  
(PERS(2024) 50)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 3 of PERS(2024) 48 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided to approve the lists of candidates submitted to it for posts of Head of

the European Union delegation to Mali and Head of the European Union delegation to The Gambia.

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

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**8. REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL: CONVERGENCE REPORT 2024 (PREPARED IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 140(1) OF THE TFEU) (COM(2024) 270 AND /2; SWD(2024) 270 AND /2; RCC(2024) 118)**

Mr DOMBROVSKIS presented the 2024 Convergence Report, which assessed the progress of non-euro area Member States towards adopting the single currency. These assessments were conducted every two years. The Report covered the six Member States which, according to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), were legally obliged to adopt the euro, i.e. Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Sweden. Denmark was not included in the Report as it was exempted from this obligation under its opt-out.

The previous report had served as a basis for Croatia's entry into the euro area, which was successfully completed on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023. The report being presented that day showed that, even though Bulgaria was close to meeting all the convergence criteria, none of the Member States assessed currently fully met the criteria. The Commission would continue to work with all the Member States covered by this report in order to foster continued convergence, thus paving the way for their sustainable euro area membership.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS highlighted Bulgaria's continued efforts to join the euro area. Specifically, Bulgaria had been participating in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM II) for more than two years, thus fulfilling the exchange rate

criterion. The inflation criterion was the only one that had not yet been met. He noted, in that regard, that the gap between Bulgaria and the best performing Member States in terms of inflation was narrowing and could close by the end of the year. The Commission would continue to assist Bulgaria in its efforts to meet all the necessary criteria, with the euro potentially being introduced from 1 January 2026.

Mr GENTILONI highlighted the very constructive approach of the Bulgarian authorities and referred to the recent discussions regarding the likely date by which Bulgaria would meet the inflation criterion. In his view, although the country's accession to the euro area could be technically feasible in 2025, a more realistic date would be 1<sup>st</sup> January 2026, given recent political and economic developments. The strong message being sent by the Commission that day was that Bulgaria was on track to meet all the convergence criteria necessary for the adoption of the euro.

The Commission was also taking advantage of the publication of the Convergence Report to communicate the results of the latest Eurobarometer survey on the acceptance of the euro in the Member States which had not yet adopted the single currency. This survey found that, overall, 58% of respondents were in favour of joining the euro area, although this varied significantly across the Member States. Introduction of the euro was supported by 76% of respondents in Hungary and 77% in Romania, compared to just 47% and 49% in Poland and Bulgaria respectively. Sweden and Czechia fell between these two extremes. Mr GENTILONI concluded by saying that, overall, only 23% of respondents thought that their country should never adopt the euro.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the annual Convergence Report for 2024 in COM(2024) 270/2 for transmission to the European Parliament and the Council, and, for information, to the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2024) 270/2, the contents of which were noted.

## 9. OTHER BUSINESS

### 9.1. *RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS*

Mr BORRELL began by referring to the Foreign Affairs Council meeting held on 24 June, ahead of the European Council scheduled for 27 and 28 June. He welcomed the adoption of sanctions against the main parties in the internal conflict in Sudan and several cyber criminals who were involved in harmful actions against Member States and Ukraine. He also mentioned the progress that had been made in relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which could lead to a lifting of the sanctions imposed on Kosovo.

Regarding Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, he highlighted the adoption of the 14<sup>th</sup> package of sanctions against Russia, which he considered particularly strong. The package contained more than 100 additions to the sanctions list and introduced dozens of new economic measures, which were aimed at preventing the re-export of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) and the circumvention of existing sanctions.

However, Mr BORRELL maintained that the top priority should be to increase support to Ukraine in terms of air defence and the supply of artillery ammunition to counter Russia's ongoing attacks, in particular against Ukrainian energy infrastructure. He therefore welcomed the recent conclusion of the political agreement establishing a legal framework for the use of windfall profits from immobilised Russian assets to finance the European Peace Facility, which would foster swift and effective support to Ukraine. Nevertheless, he also expressed concern at the blocking of several crucial legislative proposals by one Member State and called for these issues to be resolved at the next European Council.

In addition, he announced that the ongoing work on the EU's security commitments to Ukraine had been completed and that the final document was ready for signature, explaining that these commitments would play a crucial

role in helping Ukraine defend itself in the long term by discouraging future aggression and countering destabilisation efforts. He added that the intergovernmental conference of 25 June, which had marked the start of accession negotiations with Ukraine and Moldova, constituted further proof of the EU's deep and lasting commitment to Ukrainian security.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, Mr BORRELL said that three weeks after the US President Joe Biden's proposal for a ceasefire, it had not yet produced the results hoped for, despite international support. He drew attention to the ongoing catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza, recently highlighted by the director of the World Food Programme. On this point, he mentioned the statement he had issued jointly with Mr LENARČIČ, pointing out the immense challenges faced on the ground, in particular the difficulties regarding the delivery of significant humanitarian aid to Gaza.

He also warned of the increased risks of a regional escalation of the conflict, stressing that an open conflict with Lebanon would represent a direct and serious threat to the security interests of the European Union. EU foreign ministers had accordingly reiterated their commitment to maintaining an open dialogue with all parties involved and encouraging maximum restraint, in line with recent statements issued by the US.

Mr BORRELL stressed the importance of the Member States strengthening their cooperation with Arab partners to relaunch the political process aimed at a two-state solution. In this context, he highlighted Israel's positive response to the European proposal to convene an extraordinary Association Council. This meeting would in particular facilitate exchanges on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 2735.

He also noted that the ministers had agreed to step up EU support for the Palestinian Authority, helping it to implement reforms whilst ensuring the stability of its finances, including the payment of tax revenue due. He stressed

the urgent need to respond to the imminent risk of economic collapse in Palestine and called for a swift disbursement of the EU funding approved for 2022 and 2023. He also reminded the meeting of the Commission's commitment to provide financial support of EUR 400 million for the Palestinian people for 2024, including a budget of EUR 82 million for UNRWA, and stressed the need to rapidly release the remaining funds.

He further mentioned that the Foreign Affairs Council had reiterated its support to UNRWA, which provided essential services and life-saving assistance to Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank and the region. Finally, he warned of the destabilisation risks posed by any attack on a UN agency.

Mr BORRELL reported that the foreign ministers had then been joined by their counterparts from the six Western Balkan partners for an informal exchange focused on strengthening the joint commitment to foreign and security policy. The EU's message had been very clear, namely that alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy was the expression of a strategic choice, reflecting an effective commitment to accession. The importance for these countries of working with the EU to defend a rules-based international order had been reiterated; this made maintaining close ties with the Russian regime incompatible with building a common European future.

Ministers had then discussed political developments in Georgia, including the adoption and implementation of the law on transparency of foreign influence. He regretted the widespread dissemination of disinformation about the EU and its values, including by official institutions and actors. This law, and all the negative developments surrounding it, distanced Georgia from the EU and went against the wishes of the vast majority of the Georgian population.

Mr BORRELL noted that the Council had discussed gradual measures that

could be adopted with regard to Georgia, which could be lifted once the controversial law had been repealed and the backwards step in terms of democracy had been satisfactorily addressed. At the same time, ministers had expressed broad support for strengthening the EU's assistance for civil society and the media in Georgia, as well as for the fight against disinformation.

Regarding current affairs, the Council had been informed of developments in Tunisia and the deterioration of its political climate, particularly in the context of the presidential election scheduled for autumn. Tunisia had taken steps to strengthen relations with Russia, China and Iran, through high-level visits. Mr BORRELL would present a detailed report on the situation in this country at the next Foreign Affairs Council meeting. This document would enable ministers to discuss the best approaches to managing the EU's partnership with Tunisia while maintaining European support for the Tunisian people.

Lastly, Mr BORRELL said that the Council had held an exchange of views on the situation in the African Great Lakes region and its regional and geopolitical implications, focusing on the possibilities of promoting peace, democracy, and sustainable development in the region. He noted the support of ministers for (i) the forthcoming appointment of an EU Special Envoy for the region, (ii) increased diplomatic efforts to support the Luanda and Nairobi processes for a long-term solution to the crisis, including a proposal for an invitation to the ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, and (iii) additions to the lists of sanctions against the Democratic Republic of Congo, in order to target those contributing to the ongoing escalation of the conflict, after consulting the African Union and the partner countries in the region.

The Commission took note of this information.

## **9.2. PROGRESS IN ACCESSIONS TO THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The PRESIDENT asked Mr VÁRHELYI to briefly present the recent progress made with regard to the accession processes of Ukraine, Moldova and Montenegro to the European Union.

Mr VÁRHELYI reported on the successful outcome of the first intergovernmental conferences held on 25 June with Ukraine and Moldova. The conferences marked the formal launch, unanimously supported by the Member States, of accession negotiations with these two countries. He was pleased to report that the events had gone smoothly, enabling some outstanding issues to be addressed and thus paving the way for future progress.

As regards Montenegro, an intergovernmental conference was scheduled later that day (26 June), to begin the final phase of the accession negotiations. This should enable the negotiating chapters to be closed, bringing Montenegro considerably closer to a possible accession to the European Union.

Mr VÁRHELYI concluded by stressing the importance of holding regular intergovernmental conferences with all candidate countries to maintain momentum on enlargement, an objective which he hoped to achieve in close cooperation with the incoming rotating Presidency of the Council.

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The meeting closed at 9.39.