



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2025) 2540 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 19 November 2025

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2540th meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill)

on Tuesday 7 October 2025

(afternoon)

PV(2025) 2540 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Tuesday 7 October 2025 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.08 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President
Ms RIBERA	Executive Vice-President
Ms VIRKKUNEN	Executive Vice-President
Mr SÉJOURNÉ	Executive Vice-President
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member
Mr KUBILIUS	Member
Ms KOS	Member
Mr SÍKELA	Member
Mr KADIS	Member
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member
Ms LAHBIB	Member
Mr BRUNNER	Member
Ms ROSWALL	Member
Mr SERAFIN	Member
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member
Mr McGRATH	Member
Mr HANSEN	Member
Mr MICALLEF	Member

Items 1 to 10/11 (in part)

Absent:

Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President
Ms ŠUIČA	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member

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 PINHO	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Mr ADAM	Deputy Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr BAERT	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Items 10/11
Mr PIERGIOVANNI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Items 8/9
Ms REILLY	Member of the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Ms SEMLALI	Policy Assistant in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr CHARLES	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	
Mr TAQUET- GRAZIANI	Acting Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	

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

On the anniversary of the terrorist attacks by Hamas on 7 October 2023, the PRESIDENT emphasised that these barbaric assaults against Jewish civilians would remain etched in people's minds forever. The attacks had caused immense suffering to the people of Israel, and the subsequent fighting had led to the tragic loss of many Palestinian lives in Gaza. The PRESIDENT paid tribute to all the victims of this conflict, and expressed the hope that a ceasefire and a peace agreement would be achieved as soon as possible.

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, the College rose to observe a minute's silence.

* * *

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2025) 2540/FINAL; SEC(2025) 2540/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(2025) 2540)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Friday 3 October 2025.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2536th, 2537th, 2538th and 2539th meetings of 3, 9, 17 and 30 September 2025 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2025) 195)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on Thursday 2 October 2025 (RCC(2025) 195).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Amendment of Regulations (EU) 2015/1017, (EU) 2021/523, (EU) 2021/695 and (EU) 2021/1153 as regards increasing the efficiency of the EU guarantee under Regulation (EU) 2021/523 and simplifying reporting requirements (Regulation) – SALLA & TINAGLI report – 2025/0040 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 288.

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

Line set out in SI(2025) 289.

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

Line set out in SI(2025) 292.

- **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) / Union code relating to medicinal products for human use, and repealing Directive 2001/83/EC and Directive 2009/35/EC (Directive) – MONTSERRAT report – 2023/0132 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 290.

- **European Defence Industry Programme and a framework of measures to ensure the timely availability and supply of defence products (‘EDIP’) (Regulation) – GLUCKSMANN & BELLAMY report (ex-BELLAMY**

report) – 2024/0061 (COD)

Line set out in SI(2025) 293/2.

- **Provision of macro-financial assistance to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Decision) – 2025/0251 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 295/2.

- **Oral question O-000024/2025 – Declaration of principles for a gender-equal society**

Line set out in SP(2025) 334.

- **Commission draft reply to the contribution of the LXXIIIrd plenary meeting of the Conference of Parliamentary Committees for Union Affairs of Parliaments of the European Union (COSAC), 8-10 June 2025**

Line set out in SNP(2025) 10.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Annual Progress Reports on Simplification, Implementation and Enforcement – Commissioner SÍKELA**

Information set out in SPI(2025) 63.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 as regards the conditionality system, types of intervention in the form of direct payment, types of intervention in certain sectors and rural development and annual performance reports, and Regulation (EU) 2021/2116 as regards data and interoperability governance, suspensions of payments annual performance clearance and controls and penalties (Regulation) – RODRIGUES report – 2025/0236 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2025) 331/2.

- **Public interface connected to the Internal Market Information System for the declaration of posting of workers and amending Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 (Regulation) – DANIELSSON & SCHWAB report – 2024/0301 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2025) 335/3.

- **Phasing out Russian natural gas imports, improving monitoring of potential energy dependencies and amending Regulation (EU) 2017/1938 (Regulation) – VAIDERE & NIINISTÖ report – 2025/0180 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2025) 294.

- **Amendment of Regulations (EU) 2021/694, (EU) 2021/695, (EU) 2021/697, (EU) 2021/1153, (EU) 2023/1525 and (EU) 2024/795 as regards incentivising defence-related investments in the EU budget to implement the ReArm Europe Plan (Regulation) – KOLS report – 2025/0103 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2025) 296/2.

- **Amendment of Directive 2014/32/EU as regards electric vehicle supply equipment, compressed gas dispensers, and electricity, gas and thermal energy meters (Directive) – TOMAŠIČ report – 2024/0311 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2025) 298.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2025) 231)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2025) 231 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Friday 3 October 2025.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2025) 255 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 29 September and 5 October 2025.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2025) 256 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 29 September and 5 October 2025.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2025) 257 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 29 September and 5 October 2025 archived in Decide.

6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED (SEC(2025) 258 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 6 and 10 October 2025, and of the finalisation written procedures.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2025) 259)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**(PERS(2025) 79)**

During the meeting, Mr SERAFIN presented a proposal for an administrative decision, which was tabled directly to the College for approval. It was proposed to appoint Mr Valère MOUTARLIER to the post of Deputy Director-General for ‘European Industry and Decarbonisation’ at the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs.

***DG INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMEs –
APPOINTMENT OF A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT GRADE AD15
(PERS(2025) 23 TO /3)***

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Director-General for ‘European Industry and Decarbonisation’ at the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (PERS(2025) 23 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 13 May and 23 September 2025 (PERS(2025) 23/3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants’ qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr SÉJOURNÉ, it then decided to appoint Mr Valère MOUTARLIER to the post.

This decision would take effect on 16 October 2025.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE
EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – APPLY AI STRATEGY
(COM(2025) 723 TO /3; RCC(2025) 95)**

9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – A EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SCIENCE – PAVING THE WAY FOR THE RESOURCE FOR AI SCIENCE IN EUROPE (RAISE) (COM(2025) 724 TO /3; RCC(2025) 95)

The PRESIDENT introduced the two strategies on artificial intelligence (AI) that sought to accelerate AI uptake across Europe in key economic sectors and in the field of science. She emphasised the need for the use of AI to become more widespread in Europe in order to promote smarter, faster and more affordable solutions.

While discussions continued on how best to consolidate Europe's position in the field of AI, particularly as regards infrastructure, the PRESIDENT noted that there was a broad consensus on the urgent need to speed up the use of AI across all sectors. In that connection, she highlighted the EU's major strengths, namely its industrial capabilities, its talent pool and the quality of its data. She called for an 'AI-first' mindset to be adopted across all key sectors, from robotics to healthcare and from energy to automotive. This approach also applied to the Commission departments, which should embed AI in their day-to-day working methods.

Ms VIRKKUNEN said that the proposed strategies would help with the implementation of the AI Continent Action Plan that had been adopted in April and which mapped out how Europe could become a global leader in trustworthy AI. She highlighted the progress that had been made in recent years, particularly in terms of computing capabilities, with AI factories and giga-factories having been built, and in terms of data-related aspects, which would be further bolstered by the upcoming Data Union Strategy.

The Apply AI Strategy translated the guidelines set out in the action plan into concrete measures, facilitating the uptake of AI across strategic economic sectors

and in the public sector. The strategy had been drawn up following a wide-ranging public consultation process involving more than 500 stakeholders and numerous structured sectoral dialogues and discussions with the Member States and experts in the field.

The strategy comprised three strands: (i) sectoral flagships to boost AI use in key industrial sectors and the public sector, (ii) cross-cutting measures to support SMEs, boost skills and link up infrastructure, data and testing facilities, and (iii) a governance framework to coordinate all relevant stakeholders.

As regards the first strand, Ms VIRKKUNEN pointed out that only 13% of European businesses currently used AI, with significant disparities between Member States. To address this, the strategy identified 11 priority sectors, in line with the recommendations in the Draghi report, and included flagship initiatives tailored to each of these sectors. These initiatives included the creation of a network of advanced health screening centres, as well as the launch of a European Frontier AI initiative to develop European frontier AI models tailored to the needs of different sectors.

As regards the second strand, Ms VIRKKUNEN referred to the cross-cutting challenges to be addressed, in particular the need to shorten the time to market by ensuring closer links between data, computing capabilities and innovation. The strategy paid particular attention to SMEs, as they often lacked information on the opportunities that AI offered. Some 250 European Digital Innovation Hubs were already operating and were active in all the Member States; the hubs would become genuine ‘Experience Centres for AI’ that would serve as one-stop-shops for accessing the EU AI innovation ecosystem. The hubs would facilitate access to EU digital infrastructure, foster the uptake of European solutions and support an AI-first approach.

Lastly, the third strand on governance and overall coordination would see the Commission set up an Apply AI Alliance, bringing together public policymakers,

industry, academia, social partners and civil society. Moreover, an AI Observatory would monitor technological developments and their sectoral impacts to support discussions and inform policymaking.

Referring to the AI in Science Strategy, drawn up by Ms ZAHARIEVA, Ms VIRKKUNEN explained that the strategy was positioning the EU as a global hub for AI-driven scientific innovation. At its core was the ‘Resource for AI Science in Europe’ (RAISE) initiative, a virtual institute that sought to pool and coordinate European computing, data, talent and funding-related resources. The initiative would support both research on AI and the application of AI in science to foster scientific breakthroughs and the development of European Frontier AI models.

This strategy focused on excellence and attracting talent, building on the success of the ‘Choose Europe for Science’ initiative. It also set out to boost computational power, with EUR 600 million mobilised under Horizon Europe to give EU researchers and start-ups dedicated access to AI giga-factories. Investment in AI research would also be doubled to EUR 3 billion per year.

Ms VIRKKUNEN concluded by stressing that these initiatives were a further step towards creating a genuine AI continent in Europe. She called on the Commission to lead by example by fully embedding this technology in its working methods.

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

- the need for a balanced approach, that recognised both the potential of AI in terms of innovation and competitiveness and the risks associated with it;
- acknowledgement of the profoundly transformative nature of this technology and of the economic and social uncertainty it created, which had to be planned for and handled responsibly;

- the need for public and private investments that matched those made by other major economies around the world in order to safeguard EU competitiveness in this field;
- the importance of ensuring sufficient access to data, which was needed to develop AI, and of making swift progress regarding the revision of the General Data Protection Regulation in order to remove the obstacles identified;
- some concerns related to intellectual property, as well as to traceability and reliability of information;
- the potential of AI within the cultural and creative sectors, which were already using this technology, and the need to simultaneously ensure that creators' rights were safeguarded, and that EU legislation was implemented in a balanced manner;
- the need to ensure fair competition in order to prevent the concentration of innovation capacities from hampering the emergence of new players;
- the energy challenges associated with the development of AI and the importance of ensuring the sustainability of its growth;
- the urgent need to step up training and re-skilling in order to build a workforce able to work with AI, in particular through EU strategies for upskilling and digital literacy;
- the need to fully include gender equality, non-discrimination and the inclusion of people with disabilities in AI-related policies;
- finally, the need for the Commission to lead by example by more systematically integrating AI tools into its working methods.

In response to some of the points raised, Ms VIRKKUNEN stressed the importance of an approach that drove innovation while also providing a clear and responsible

framework. She reiterated the EU's commitment to trustworthy AI, based inter alia on transparency, security, respect for copyright, and data protection.

The overall framework had been established under the AI Continent Action Plan, while the reliability and safety aspects were covered by the AI Act that entered into force on 1 August 2024. She noted that the implementation of this Regulation had been gradual, with certain high-risk practices being banned since February 2025, while the provisions on generative AI had come into force in August, and the rules on other high-risk use cases were due to enter into force in 2026. In this regard, she stressed how important it was for standardisation bodies to publish without delay the technical specifications needed in the industry to ensure harmonised compliance.

In particular, the Apply AI Strategy aimed to accelerate the uptake of AI technology in strategic sectors. Ms VIRKKUNEN stressed the need to mobilise large-scale public and private investments to support innovation, welcoming in this regard the EUR 230 billion in potential investments received in response to her call for expression of interest on AI gigafactories.

She also highlighted the need to work with Ms MÎNZATU to strengthen AI skills, as well as improving access to data, noting that the difficulties encountered in the application of the General Data Protection Regulation would be examined as part of the digital simplification package scheduled for autumn. Finally, she highlighted that the development of energy-efficient AI solutions was considered to be a priority, including in the future Cloud and AI Development Act.

The PRESIDENT concluded by stressing the transformative potential of AI, particularly in healthcare, where its use for the analysis of test results such as X-rays or magnetic resonance imaging increased the reliability of diagnostics. She stressed the need to make full use of this technology in order to reap all the benefits. She reminded the College of the progress made on the simplification and transparency of reporting obligations through the increased use of digital tools. Finally, she invited

the Members of the College to identify AI applications already in use within their departments and to report back to a future College meeting.

Following these presentations, the Commission, on a proposal from the PRESIDENT, confirmed that the Communications set out in COM(2025) 723/3 and COM(2025) 724/3 would be formally adopted by finalisation written procedure, the deadline for which was set at Wednesday 8 October 2025 at 10.00 a.m. (PE/2025/6938 and PE/2025/6964).

10. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ADDRESSING THE NEGATIVE TRADE-RELATED EFFECTS OF GLOBAL OVERCAPACITY ON THE UNION STEEL MARKET

(COM(2025) 726 TO /3; SWD(2025) 780; RCC(2025) 93)

11. RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL DECISION AUTHORISING THE OPENING OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH A VIEW TO MODIFYING THE UNION'S CONCESSIONS MADE IN THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION ON IMPORT TARIFFS APPLICABLE TO CERTAIN STEEL PRODUCTS

(COM(2025) 727; RCC(2025) 93)

Mr SÉJOURNÉ introduced the proposal for a Regulation to protect the EU steel sector from the unfair effects of global overcapacity by referring to the importance of the European steel sector, which employed around 300 000 people directly and had a production capacity of 135 million tonnes. He drew attention to the challenges facing this pivotal strategic industry, which was on the verge of collapse in some Member States. This was hampering its ability to invest in decarbonisation.

There were two options in his view: either to allow the market to evolve as Chinese overcapacity destabilised it, or to protect the sector and boost its competitiveness.

The initiative presented that day was the first step in protecting the sector from unfair global competition; the second step being to draw up an agenda to boost its competitiveness.

Mr SÉJOURNÉ said that the agenda should address the reform of the carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM), the fight against circumvention of trade defence measures, the reduction of energy costs and the promotion of the green steel label to enhance decarbonisation efforts. He also considered it necessary to stimulate demand, mirroring what was being done in the automotive industry, and to overhaul public procurement to promote decarbonised steel in Europe.

He concluded by arguing that Europe had no industrial future without a dynamic, resilient and sovereign steel industry, as it was essential for many sectors such as defence and cars.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ noted that overcapacity, which was a problem for the world economy, was caused not only by China. Steel production capacity had also increased considerably in many partner countries in recent years. Overcapacity was more than five times the EU's annual steel consumption, had reached 620 million tonnes and could rise to 721 million tonnes by 2027. The situation was further aggravated by the closure of some markets in third countries that had put in place tariffs and trade defence measures to protect their industries. This had a negative impact on European exports and created a risk of flows shifting to the EU market.

The Commission's main aim had always been to tackle the root causes of the challenges faced, while ensuring secure supply chains and boosting transparency in the global steel market. However, despite these efforts, especially within the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity set up in 2016, progress was still limited. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ would take part in another meeting of the forum on Friday 10 October, in the margins of the G20 ministerial meeting in South Africa.

He explained that the proposal put forward that day would replace the steel safeguard measure, which was due to expire in June 2026, mirroring its essential

components while eliminating its shortcomings. The new measure would be based on tariff-rate quotas. This meant the European market would not be closed, but duty-free imports would be limited to 18.3 million tonnes a year – a 47% reduction compared with the 2024 steel quotas. Security of supply for downstream sectors like the automotive industry would thus be preserved and a significant increase in steel prices would be avoided.

The new measure would also double the out-of-quota duty to 50%, compared with 25% under the current safeguard measure. It would improve traceability in steel markets by requiring importers to provide information on the place where steel was melted and poured to avoid circumvention. Lastly, the new system would allow tariff quotas to be increased or decreased as needed.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ added that the proposed measure fully complied with the rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO). To ensure legal soundness, effectiveness and WTO compliance, the new provisions would have to apply *erga omnes*. They would thus cover imports from all countries, including those linked to the EU by a free trade agreement, which accounted for almost 70% of steel imports. Concerns among key partners about this change in EU tariffs would be addressed in a transparent and WTO-compliant way. As soon as it had received a mandate from the Council, the Commission would start a dialogue with the trading partners concerned under Article XXVIII of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), with a view to proposing country allocations to them.

The proposed Regulation also allowed future agreements to be incorporated into this new framework. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ concluded by adding that many Member States and more than 100 MEPs had called for the measure, and that it was based on a wide-ranging consultation of the sector.

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

- very strong support for the proposed measure given the disparity between global production capacity and EU consumption;
- the soundness of the new measure and the case for considering similar approaches in other areas linked to the steel industry;
- the need to assess the impact of the measure on some downstream industries, especially the steel-intensive chemical industry;
- the importance of excluding agricultural products from the compensation provided for in agreements with third countries, given the substantial pressure already faced by the sector;
- the question of how the new measure dovetailed with the EU’s financial support to Ukraine – a major steel exporter to the EU that had enjoyed duty-free access since 2022 – and the need to attach conditions to that support;
- with regard to the three countries of the European Economic Area (EEA) which were exempt from the proposed measure, a reminder that access to the European market should be reciprocal, reference being made to the situation in the fisheries sector;
- the need to protect European jobs and steel produced in the EU, despite the EU’s strong commitment to free trade;
- the consistency of the measure with the future Industrial Decarbonisation Accelerator and Circular Economy Act, and the willingness to support industrial projects for decarbonised steel production;
- the importance of the efforts made to lower energy prices, fossil fuels being the main challenge, and reference to several possible solutions, such as carbon capture and storage, green hydrogen (which required suitable infrastructure) and biogas (the potential of which was still largely untapped).

In response to some of the points raised, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ clarified the principle of compensation for third countries and stated that special attention would be paid to the agricultural sector during the negotiations. He pointed out that such compensation had already been used in discussions on the agri-food sector within the WTO. He stressed that these adjustments, which would allow zero-rate imports of small quantities of steel, would be made by means of implementing acts that could be amended. Lastly, under the WTO procedure, new import conditions had to be notified to the countries concerned, which would then decide whether to enter into discussions on compensation.

The PRESIDENT concluded by pointing out that the loss of competitiveness in the European steel sector resulted from several factors, notably energy prices. She stressed the need to step up efforts on renewables and nuclear energy to further the EU's energy autonomy and security. She highlighted the significant reduction in the EU's dependence on Russian natural gas imports, from 45% in 2021 to around 18% at present.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 726/3, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council and the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2025) 780, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the Recommendation for a Council Decision in COM(2025) 727 for transmission to the Council and, for information, to the European Parliament and the national parliaments.

**12. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – UNION OF EQUALITY: LGBTIQ+ EQUALITY STRATEGY 2026-2030
(COM(2025) 725 AND /2; RCC(2025) 94)**

Ms MÎNZATU introduced the Communication by noting that it formed part of the broader effort to build a Union of equality. She emphasised the European Union's leading international role in promoting equality and inclusion, and the importance of maintaining sustained efforts in this area.

Ms LAHBIB pointed out that the PRESIDENT, in her recent State of the Union address, had stressed the importance of protecting all freedoms: the freedom to decide, to speak out, to move around the continent, to vote, to love, to pray and to live in a Union of equality. She therefore felt that the new strategy needed to convey this strong message to current and future generations.

She referred to the improved social acceptance of people identifying as LGBTIQ+ in Europe in recent years, but noted at the same time that they continued to face disproportionate levels of violence. She believed that this situation justified the presentation that day of this new strategy and stressed the importance for the European Union, in the current geopolitical context, of setting an example and defending its founding values of freedom, equality and democracy. She also noted that the European Parliament, by means of a resolution, and 20 Member States, by signing a ministerial declaration, had asked the Commission to present this new strategy.

The new strategy built on the achievements of the current strategy while paving the way for further progress through a dual approach consisting, on the one hand, of proposing targeted measures and, on the other hand, of mainstreaming equality in all Commission policies. She felt that equal treatment was essential for democratic

resilience and social justice in Europe, adding that, according to recent studies by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), diversity and inclusion fostered innovation and economic growth.

Ms LAHBIB then referred to some key actions, in particular the abolition of conversion therapies, which was the subject of a European Citizens' Initiative, and the fight against hate speech offline and online. There was also a proposal to improve the collection, analysis and use of equality data in order to develop evidence-based policies.

As engagement with civil society was essential when LGBTIQ+ rights and freedoms were at risk, the current funding under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme would continue until 2027. Under the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), funding would be provided under the CERV+ strand of the AgoraEU programme, with a proposed budget of up to EUR 3.6 billion to defend equality and non-discrimination, combat gender-based violence and promote democratic participation.

Ms LAHBIB concluded her presentation by stressing that this new LGBTIQ+ equality strategy was not an ethical choice but aimed at improving equal rights and inclusion.

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

- the importance for the European Union of defending its values and the rule of law;
- a reminder of the initiative currently being prepared on the Democracy Shield, as well as the legislative proposals currently being discussed with the co-legislators on victims' rights and training for judicial staff;

- the acknowledgement of an interinstitutional deadlock on the issue of extending the list of EU crimes to include hate crimes and hate speech.

In the context of the preparatory work on the Democracy Shield, the PRESIDENT asked all the Members of the College to step up exchanges with the Members of the European Parliament. She stressed that it was particularly important that this initiative was placed in the right perspective and that no room was left for interpretations promoted in the context of external interference.

Following this presentation, the Commission agreed, on a proposal from the PRESIDENT, that the Communication in COM(2025) 725/2 would be formally adopted by finalisation written procedure, the deadline for which was set at 10.00 a.m. on Wednesday 8 October 2025 (PE/2025/6978).

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The meeting closed at 14.46.