



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2026) 2551 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 26 February 2026

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2551st meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 20 January 2026

(afternoon)

PV(2026) 2551 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Tuesday 20 January 2026 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.04 with Ms RIBERA in the chair.

Present:

Ms RIBERA	Executive Vice-President	
Ms VIRKKUNEN	Executive Vice-President	
Mr SÉJOURNÉ	Executive Vice-President	
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member	
Ms ŠUICA	Member	
Mr KUBILIUS	Member	
Ms KOS	Member	
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member	Items 9/10 (in part) to 12
Ms LAHBIB	Member	Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Mr BRUNNER	Member	
Ms ROSWALL	Member	
Mr SERAFIN	Member	
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member	
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member	Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Mr McGRATH	Member	
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member	Items 8 (in part) to 9/10 (in part)
Mr HANSEN	Member	
Mr MICALLEF	Member	

Absent:

Ms von der LEYEN	President
Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member
Mr SÍKELA	Member
Mr KADIS	Member

The following also sat in:

Mr DE GREGORIO	Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr ADAM	Deputy Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Ms PODESTA	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms ERIKSSON WATERSCHOOT	Deputy Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr CALACEAN	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr PIERGIOVANNI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Item 8
Ms SEMLALI	Policy Assistant in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr TAQUET-GRAZIANI	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	
Ms DAGILE	Deputy Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	

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

Ms RIBERA opened the meeting by expressing her deep sadness at the tragic train accident that had occurred in Spain on Sunday 18 January. She sent a message of support to the families of the victims and to all those affected by this accident.

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1. AGENDAS (OJ(2026) 2551/FINAL; SEC(2025) 2551/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) 2551)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 19 January 2026.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2547th, 2548th, 2549th and 2550th meetings of 3, 10 and 16 December 2025 and 14 January 2026 for a later date.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(RCC(2025) 152)**

The Commission took note of the outcome of the written exchange of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) for the week from 12 to 16 January 2026 (RCC(2026) 152).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **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 repeal of Directive 2001/83/EC and Directive 2009/35/EC (Directive) – MONTSERRAT (ex-WEISS-EHLER) report – 2023/0132 (COD)

Line set out in SI(2026) 6/2.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 as regards increased efficiency of the External Action Guarantee (Regulation) – McALLISTER & GOERENS report – 2025/0262 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 4.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 establishing common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights, and Regulation (EC) No 2027/97 on air carrier liability in respect of the carriage of passengers and their baggage by air (Regulation) – NOVAKOV (ex-ARIAS ECHEVERRÍA & ex-BACH) report – 2013/0072 (COD)**

Line set out in SP(2026) 5.

- **Objection to a delegated act pursuant to Rule 114(3) of the European Parliament's rules of procedure: amendment of Delegated Regulation (EU) 2015/35 as regards technical provisions, long-term guarantee measures, own funds, equity risk, spread risk on securitisation positions, other standard formula capital requirements, reporting and disclosure, proportionality and group solvency (C(2025) 7206)**

Line set out in SP(2026) 13.

- **Amendment of Directive (EU) 2015/637 on the coordination and cooperation measures to facilitate consular protection for unrepresented**

citizens of the Union in third countries and Directive (EU) 2019/997 establishing an EU Emergency Travel Document (Council Directive) – 2023/0441 (CNS)

Line set out in SI(2026) 7.

- **Oral Question O-000045/2025 – A new action plan to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights (EPSR)**

Line set out in SP(2026) 12.

- **Establishment of the Union Customs Code and the European Union Customs Authority, and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 (Regulation) – GOTINK (ex-CLUNE) report – 2023/0156 (COD)**

Line set out in SPI(2026) 11.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Scrutiny of delegated and implementing acts and related empowerments (DG JUST, DG ECHO & DG HERA)**

Information set out in SPI(2026) 9.

- **Scrutiny of delegated and implementing acts and related empowerments (DG REGIO)**

Information set out in SPI(2026) 14.

- **Framework for strengthening the availability and security of supply of critical medicinal products as well as the availability of, and accessibility of, medicinal products of common interest, and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2024/795 (Regulation) – SOKOL report – 2025/0102 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2026) 6/2.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2025) 202)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Thursday 15 January 2026 (RCC(2025) 202).

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2026) 6 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 12 and 18 January 2026.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2026) 7 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 12 and 18 January 2026.

**6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2026) 8 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 12 and 18 January 2026, as archived in Decide.

**6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED
(SEC(2026) 9 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 19 and 23 January 2026 and of a finalisation written procedure.

6.5. COMMISSION DECISION AMENDING DECISION C(2021) 2011 AS REGARDS THE EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS RELATING TO THE TASKS OF THE ADMINISTRATOR FOR ASSISTANCE MEASURES OF THE EUROPEAN PEACE FACILITY (C(2026) 409)

The Commission decided to amend the general empowerment granted to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in the capacity of Vice-President of the Commission, and the delegation granted to the Head of the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments in relation to the tasks of the administrator for assistance measures of the European Peace Facility.

The Commission adopted the Decision in C(2026) 409.

**7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2026) 10 AND /2)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2026) 2/2 AND /3)**

During the meeting, Mr SERAFIN presented an additional proposal for an administrative decision, which was tabled directly to the College for approval. It was proposed to approve the transfer in the interest of the service of Mr Hubert GAMBS to the post of Deputy Director-General responsible for the ‘Digital Transition, Justice and Consumers’ Directorate in DG Justice and Consumers.

7.1. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – TRANSFER IN THE INTEREST OF THE SERVICE, UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS, OF AN AD15 OFFICIAL

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr SÉJOURNÉ and Mr McGRATH, the Commission decided to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Hubert GAMBS, currently Director of the ‘Simplification, SMEs, Barrier Removal’ Directorate in DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, to the post of Deputy Director-General responsible for the ‘Digital Transition, Justice and Consumers’ Directorate in DG Justice and Consumers.

This decision would take effect on 16 February 2026.

7.2. DG BUDGET – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14 (PERS(2026) 3 AND /2)

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 ‘Accountability, Transparency and Protection of the Union’s Financial Interests’ Directorate in DG Budget (PERS(2026) 3).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 18 December 2025 and 8 January 2026 (PERS(2026) 3/2).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants’ qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Ms Tina SVENDSTRUP to the post.

This decision would take effect on 1 March 2026.

7.3. DG BUDGET – AUTHORISATION OF THE INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14/15, AND

***EXTERNAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14, OF A DIRECTOR POST
(PERS(2026) 4)***

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to authorise the internal and interinstitutional publication, at grade AD14/15, and external publication, at grade AD14, of the vacancy notice set out in PERS(2026) 4 for the post of Director of the ‘Financial Market Operations’ Directorate in DG Budget, in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**8. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
AND OF THE COUNCIL ON DIGITAL NETWORKS, AMENDING
REGULATION (EU) 2015/2120, DIRECTIVE 2002/58/EC AND DECISION
N° 676/2002/EC AND REPEALING REGULATION (EU) 2018/1971,
DIRECTIVE (EU) 2018/1972 AND DECISION N° 243/2012/EU (DIGITAL
NETWORKS ACT)
(COM(2026) 16/3; SWD(2026) 13; SWD(2026) 14; SEC(2026) 14; RCC(2026) 5)**

Ms RIBERA introduced the Digital Networks Act, stressing that it was an ambitious proposal aimed at improving the regulatory framework for digital infrastructure and streamlining the existing acquis in order to support the development of the sector and promote a truly European approach. She welcomed the quality of the initiative and the extensive input received from stakeholders, and considered that the proposal ushered in a new era for digital networks.

Ms VIRKKUNEN pointed out that the initiative modernised and combined four legislative instruments in the telecommunications sector into a single Regulation establishing a common framework and a harmonised approach at EU level. She

explained that the choice of a Regulation would allow for faster and direct implementation, without any transposition deadlines, and help strengthen the integration of the internal market.

She reminded the College that the Draghi, Letta and Niinistö reports had highlighted the need to strengthen the single market for connectivity, reduce regulatory fragmentation, support competitiveness and reduce dependencies. However, in a context of 27 separate national regimes, the EU would not be able to fully exploit its digital potential. She highlighted the creation of a ‘single passport’, allowing operators to provide networks and services in several Member States on the basis of a single authorisation while reducing administrative burdens and reporting obligations.

While the allocation of radio spectrum remained a Member State competence, the Regulation proposed that day strengthened coordination at EU level and provided for a European approach in certain strategic dimensions, including satellite connectivity. Ms VIRKKUNEN added that the aim of the Regulation was to create favourable conditions for innovation and the scaling-up of European businesses. High-performance resilient digital infrastructure was key to strengthening Europe’s leadership in innovation, competitiveness and digital sovereignty.

In this regard, she noted that old copper networks did not allow for the objective of making innovative technologies widely available throughout the EU to be achieved. The proposed Regulation therefore provided for the mandatory establishment of national transition plans by 2029 to ensure the phase-out of copper networks and the transition to advanced networks between 2030 and 2035. During this transition, there would be safeguards in place to protect all consumers, notably an obligation to provide clear information about switch-offs and guarantees of service continuity.

Ms VIRKKUNEN also highlighted the measures aimed at increasing the predictability and attractiveness of investments, notably through spectrum licences of longer duration, accompanied by competition safeguards, and simplification

efforts such as harmonised rules, common models and a reduction in reporting obligations. She also noted the introduction of a chapter on network resilience and security, reminding the College that connectivity failures were often among the main causes of major disruptions. She drew attention to the establishment of a preparedness plan at EU level and to the link with the obligations planned in connection with the revision of the Cybersecurity Act.

Lastly, she mentioned anti-fraud measures and provisions to boost innovation, in particular the mechanism enabling the Commission to provide legal clarity on innovative services such as virtual network slicing, a key 5G technology.

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

- the overall quality of the proposal and its ambition in terms of achieving greater integration in the single market for connectivity;
- questions relating to security, lawful access to data by the competent authorities and a level playing field, since the proposal covered traditional telecommunications operators but not ‘over-the-top’ services.

In response to some of the points raised, Ms VIRKKUNEN reminded the College that the Digital Networks Act focused on the regulation of connectivity infrastructure, while ‘over-the-top’ communication services fell under other legal frameworks, such as the Digital Markets Act, the Digital Services Act or the relevant legislation on the information society. She acknowledged the importance of ensuring effective lawful access to data for law enforcement authorities, but considered that these matters would need to be addressed in the appropriate legal instruments.

The Director-General of the Legal Service took the floor to remind the College that the legal basis for the proposal was Article 114 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which had as its objective the harmonisation and

proper functioning of the internal market through the removal of barriers to trade. He considered that an extension of the scope of the Regulation to provisions relating to other policies, notably in the area of justice and home affairs, would raise legal and institutional questions.

Following these presentations, the Commission, on a proposal from Ms RIBERA, agreed that the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2026) 16/3 would be formally adopted by the finalisation written procedure, the deadline for which was set at 10.00 on Wednesday 21 January 2026 (PE/2026/262).

9. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON THE EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR CYBERSECURITY (ENISA), THE EUROPEAN CYBERSECURITY CERTIFICATION FRAMEWORK, AND ICT SUPPLY CHAIN SECURITY AND REPEALING REGULATION (EU) 2019/881 (THE CYBERSECURITY ACT 2)

(COM(2026) 11/3; SWD(2026) 11/2; SWD(2026) 12/2; SEC(2026) 11; RCC(2026) 4)

10. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING DIRECTIVE (EU) 2022/2555 AS REGARDS SIMPLIFICATION MEASURES AND ALIGNMENT WITH THE [PROPOSAL FOR THE CYBERSECURITY ACT 2]

(COM(2026) 13/2; SWD(2026) 11/2; SWD(2026) 12/2; SEC(2026) 11; RCC(2026) 4)

Ms RIBERA introduced the cybersecurity package by stressing the increasing scale of the challenges in this area against a backdrop of surging cyber threats and incidents affecting the EU. She highlighted the need to update existing working methods and tools to better prevent, detect and manage those risks.

Ms VIRKKUNEN explained that the package followed on from the Preparedness Union Strategy and the ProtectEU Strategy. The proposed revision of the Cybersecurity Act had four complementary strands, which aimed to (i) strengthen the EU's cybersecurity capabilities, including through an enhanced role for the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA), (ii) secure information and communication technology (ICT) supply chains, (iii) increase the effectiveness of the European cybersecurity certification framework and (iv) facilitate implementation of existing rules by the relevant players.

She stressed that the EU was facing intensifying cyber threats as part of a hybrid strategy, which included foreign interference, espionage, sabotage and cyberattacks targeting critical services and infrastructure. She specified that these threats were not theoretical and mentioned specific incidents that demonstrated the possibility of remote interference in essential systems, including transport and electricity.

Ms VIRKKUNEN underlined in that regard the key role of 5G networks – as the genuine backbone of Europe's economy and society – and their importance for security and defence preparedness and resilience. Although the EU toolbox for 5G security had been published more than five years previously, it was non-binding and thus implemented unevenly by Member States, limiting its effectiveness and increasing the risks of fragmentation in the single market. In this context, the Cybersecurity Act would require European mobile telecommunications networks to withdraw from high-risk third-country providers for critical parts of networks, building on the work already done through the toolbox for 5G security.

This approach was part of a cross-cutting, technologically neutral framework and resulted from an evaluation process conducted in close cooperation with the Member States in the cooperation group set up by the Directive on security of network and information systems (NIS). The new proposed Regulation set out a trusted ICT supply chain security framework based on a harmonised, proportionate and risk-based approach. This would allow the EU and Member States to jointly identify and mitigate risks in the 18 critical sectors covered by the NIS 2 Directive,

also taking into account economic impacts and market supply. Ms VIRKKUNEN explained in this regard that the proposed mechanism did not constitute a general ban on third-country suppliers. On the contrary, it was based on targeted and proportionate risk assessments using objective criteria. Where appropriate, it could go as far as restrictions or exclusions for certain critical parts of networks.

She also pointed out that the package significantly bolstered ENISA's mandate so it could better help Member States and the EU to prevent, detect and respond to cyber incidents, as well as manage vulnerabilities and support consistent implementation of European cybersecurity policies. Lastly, she highlighted the simplification efforts included in the package, in particular the revision of the European cybersecurity certification framework and the targeted amendments to the NIS 2 Directive, which aimed to improve legal clarity, reduce compliance burdens for businesses, facilitate the management of cross-border situations and further harmonise implementation in the single market.

During the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the strategic and cross-cutting role of cybersecurity as a pillar of the EU's democratic resilience, civil preparedness and security and defence, including in the face of hybrid threats and attempted interference in democratic institutions and electoral processes;
- the need for increased and more regular commitment by Member States to invest in national cybersecurity capacities, including in the private sector;
- the relevance of prioritising security risks related to ICT supply chains, using evidence-based analysis and appropriate assessments, with a long-term goal of reducing critical dependencies and boosting the EU's strategic autonomy;
- the need to adopt a realistic and strategic approach to funding, given the existing budgetary constraints, involving clear trade-offs between priorities and

exploration of complementary sources of funding, in particular through fee mechanisms for EU agencies;

- the importance of the EU's external involvement in cybersecurity, in particular through ENISA's cooperation with candidate countries;
- lastly, the need for the right skills and talent to address these priorities.

In response to some of the points raised during the debate, Ms VIRKKUNEN highlighted the extent of the cybersecurity skills gap, estimated at several hundred thousand ICT specialists in the EU. She pointed out that increased use of artificial intelligence (AI) could help strengthen prevention and detection capabilities, while also generating new security challenges. She therefore stressed the need for sufficient and tailored resources, pointing out that a bigger role for ENISA also covered skills and capacity-building. In that regard, she noted the difficulties encountered in attracting and retaining highly qualified candidates in a competitive economic context.

Lastly, she felt that differences in implementation by Member States would create risks of fragmentation. Hence the need for a coordinated EU approach, along with a careful assessment of available resources.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2026) 11/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Data Protection Board, the European Data Protection Supervisor and the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2026) 11/2, SWD(2026) 12/2 and SEC(2026) 11, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Directive in COM(2026) 13/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social

Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Data Protection Board, the European Data Protection Supervisor and the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2026) 11/2, SWD(2026) 12/2 and SEC(2026) 11, the contents of which were noted.

11. 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: ANTI-RACISM STRATEGY 2026-2030

(COM(2026) 12/2; RCC(2026) 1)

Ms LAHBIB introduced the first-ever European Anti-Racism Strategy, which was the concrete expression of a commitment set out in the PRESIDENT's Political Guidelines for 2024-2029 and touched on many areas, including employment, housing and education.

The strategy was both timely and necessary, as tackling racism was above all a response to the moral and political imperative to uphold the EU's fundamental values and to continue building a Union of Equality. In the light of global events, she felt it was essential for the European Union to lead by example and clearly defend equality, democracy and fundamental freedoms. She noted that the reality of the situation in the EU made this strategy necessary, with the latest Eurobarometer data revealing that two thirds of Europeans still considered racial discrimination to be widespread. She pointed in particular to the rise in discrimination based on skin colour and stressed that Roma were still the most affected group in the EU, with levels of perceived discrimination now higher than in previous years.

Ms LAHBIB argued that equal opportunities and equal treatment were not only fundamental values, but also key aspects of resilient democracies and healthy

societies. She stressed that combating racism was also a strategic investment in the EU's competitiveness. According to a recent study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), racial and ethnic discrimination cost the EU up to EUR 12.7 billion in GDP each year. With that in mind, she stressed that diversity, equality and inclusion were not barriers to competitiveness, but rather pre-requisites for a successful economy, especially at a time when Europe needed to fully harness all available skills and talent. In particular, many Europeans of African descent were overqualified for their jobs, which meant that Europe was wasting significant economic potential.

The strategy responded to a clear political demand from both the European Parliament, which had called for an EU anti-racism strategy by voting through a resolution in November 2022, and the Council, which had adopted conclusions on this issue in December 2025. Ms LAHBIB explained that the strategy built on the 2020-2025 Anti-Racism Action Plan from the Commission's previous term of office as well as the progress it had made possible, particularly the adoption of national action plans by 14 Member States. However, she stressed that further efforts were needed to ensure that all Member States were fully on board.

She then explained that the strategy addressed all forms of racism. The first work strand concerned the implementation of the Racial Equality Directive that had been adopted 25 years previously. Implementation of the Directive was still patchy and the Commission would analyse national systems for imposing penalties to make them more effective. The strategy also looked at emerging forms of discrimination relating to new technologies, including algorithmic discrimination. She gave concrete examples, such as cases where automated systems led to higher insurance premiums depending on a person's place of birth, or where facial recognition technologies did not correctly identify people from certain ethnic backgrounds. She stressed the importance of data collection, knowledge sharing and targeted measures to tackle these practices.

Ms LAHBIB emphasised the need to combat structural racism, which was rooted in people's attitudes as well as institutional practices. For that reason, a major focus of the strategy was education, training and awareness-raising. In that connection, she announced initiatives under the Erasmus+ programme to support teacher and student training, engagement with civil society, and the organisation of debates and conferences. She also referred to the upcoming implementation of the Directive on equality bodies, which would build institutional capacity at national level.

She also stressed the importance of partnerships at European, national, regional and local level and highlighted the pivotal role of civil society organisations. Financial support would be provided under the new AgoraEU programme, which included a budget envelope to support projects that promoted equality and fundamental rights.

Lastly, she highlighted the fact that the Commission should lead by example. On that point, she announced that the internal action plan on diversity and inclusion in the workplace would be updated in 2026, encompassing ongoing equality training, mentoring and coaching for staff, as well as targeted outreach to attract candidates from under-represented ethnic backgrounds and enhance the visibility and appeal of EU careers. She concluded by stressing that equality and the fight against discrimination were, by definition, policies that concerned the entire institution.

During the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- strong support for the strategy, which was a concrete means of strengthening the EU as a community of shared values that needed to lead by example in terms of promoting equality and tolerance;
- the key role of education in combating racism and discrimination, and the need to foster openness, mutual respect and tolerance from an early age;
- the favourable reception given to the fulfilment, through this strategy, of recommendations made as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe;

- the economic dimension of racism and discrimination, which led to high levels of lost output;
- the need to address all forms of racism and hatred, including anti-Semitism, in a comprehensive and joined-up EU approach;
- the importance of stepping up outreach efforts with the Member States to encourage those that had not already done so to draw up national action plans to combat racism.

Following the presentation, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2026) 12/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and, for information, to the national parliaments.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ reported on his trip to Paraguay with the PRESIDENT to sign the free trade agreement with the Mercosur countries on Saturday 17 January. Noting that he had also visited Brazil, he was pleased to be able to report that in both countries there was a broad convergence of views with the EU on many issues.

In this context, he also drew the attention of the College to two important votes in Parliament scheduled that week: one, on Thursday 22 January, on a motion of censure tabled following the signing of the trade agreement with Mercosur, and the other, on Wednesday 21 January, on the request for an opinion from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) on the compatibility with the Treaties of the proposed partnership agreement and interim trade agreement between the EU and Mercosur. He pointed out that the latter vote, if positive, could delay the entry into force of the agreement by two years, which would have serious economic

consequences and could also affect relations with partner countries.

During the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the particular importance of this trade agreement for the EU’s credibility and for offsetting potential new restrictions on access to other markets in the current geopolitical context;
- the need for effective communication and outreach with the European Parliament in the run-up to the vote on the referral to the CJEU;
- the difficult situation in the agricultural sector, which was already facing several outbreaks of animal diseases, rising fertiliser prices and the consequences of the entry into force of the carbon border adjustment mechanism;
- concerns within the same sector regarding the ability to monitor compliance with European health standards on imported products;
- the need, in this regard, to restate the possibilities offered by the safeguard clause attached to the trade agreement and to counter disinformation circulating in certain Member States;
- a reminder of the importance of the principle of collegiality underpinning the Commission’s working methods, and the issue of uncoordinated changes to the schedule of planned initiatives.

Mr JØRGENSEN then provided an update on the tensions surrounding Greenland’s sovereignty. He referred to the meeting of the Security College scheduled for Friday 23 January after the Special European Council on Thursday 22 January, and said that he was looking forward to an open discussion on the strategy to adopt.

During the brief discussion that followed, the Commission mentioned the extreme

volatility of the situation and the importance of acting in unity, highlighting the EU's economic strength and competitiveness and the assets it had at its disposal to build its security and defence.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 14.52.