



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2026) 2564 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 10 June 2026

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2564th meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill)

on Tuesday 28 April 2026

(afternoon)

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Single sitting: Tuesday 28 April 2026 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.05 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	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr SÉJOURNÉ	Executive Vice-President	
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President	
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	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 JØRGENSEN	Member	
Mr McGRATH	Member	
Mr HANSEN	Member	
Mr MICALLEF	Member	

Absent:

Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President
Ms ŠUICA	Member
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member
Mr SERAFIN	Member
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Mr DE GREGORIO	Director-General, Legal Service
Ms SPINANT	Director-General, DG Communication
Mr GILL	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission
Mr ADAM	Deputy Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Ms REILLY	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Mr PIERGIOVANNI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms HENMAN	Member of the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms LAHOUSSE JUÁREZ	Policy Coordinator in the Secretariat-General

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by Mr TAQUET-GRAZIANI, Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2026) 2564/FINAL; SEC(2026) 2564/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(2026) 2564)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 27 April 2026.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2561st, 2562nd and 2563rd meetings of 25 March, and 13 and 22 April 2026 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2026) 169)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on Friday 24 April 2026 (RCC(2026) 169).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 2023/2124 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 4 October 2023 on certain provisions for fishing in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Agreement area (Regulation) – ZOVKO report – 2024/0098 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 110.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2017/2107 laying down management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Convention area of the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT); Regulation (EU) 2018/975 laying down management, conservation and control measures applicable in the South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation (SPRFMO) Convention Area; Regulation (EU) 2019/833 laying down conservation and enforcement measures applicable in the Regulatory Area of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organisation (NAFO); Regulation (EU) 2021/56 laying down management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Inter-American Tropical Tuna Convention (IATTC); Regulation (EU) 2022/2056 laying down conservation and management measures applicable in the Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) Convention Area; Regulation (EU) 2022/2343 laying down management, conservation and control measures applicable in the Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC) Area of Competence; and Regulation (EU) 2023/2053 establishing a multiannual management plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean (Regulation) – BAJADA report – 2025/0106 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 115.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems and Regulation (EC) No 987/2009 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 (Regulation) – BISCHOFF report – 2016/0397 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 119.

- **Amendment of Regulations (EU) 2024/1689 and (EU) 2018/1139 as regards the simplification of the implementation of harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Digital Omnibus on AI) (Regulation) – KOKALARI & McNAMARA report – 2025/0359 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 111/2.

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- **Objection to an implementing act pursuant to Rule 115(2) and (3) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament – Commission draft Implementing Decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified soybean MON 94637, pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council**

Line set out in SP(2026) 163/2.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 904/2010 as regards the access of the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) to value added tax information at Union level (Council Regulation) – HADJIPANTELA report – 2025/0348 (CNS)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 121.

- **Oral Question O-000016/2026 – Enforcement of the Digital Markets Act**

Line set out in SP(2026) 164.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Establishment of an exchange, assistance and training programme for the protection of the euro against counterfeiting for the period 2028-2034 (the ‘Pericles V programme’) and repeal of Regulation (EU) 2021/840 (Regulation) – McNAMARA report – 2025/0258 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2026) 98/2.

- **Establishment of the Erasmus+ programme for the period 2028-2034, and repeal of Regulations (EU) 2021/817 and (EU) 2021/888 (Regulation) – ZDROJEWSKI report – 2025/0222 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2026) 107.

- **Establishment of the ‘AgoraEU’ programme for the period 2028-2034, and**

**repealing Regulations (EU) 2021/692 and (EU) 2021/818 (Regulation) –
RAFOWICZ & KUHNKE report – 2025/0550 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2026) 108.

- **European Chemicals Agency and amendment of Regulations (EC) No 1907/2006, (EU) No 528/2012, (EU) No 649/2012 and (EU) 2019/1021 (Regulation) – CLERGEAU report – 2025/0207 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2026) 149.

- **Amendment of Regulations (EC) No 1272/2008, (EC) No 1223/2009 and (EU) 2019/1009 as regards simplification of certain requirements and procedures for chemical products (Regulation) – TSIODRAS & MÜLLER report – 2025/0531 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2026) 150/2.

- **Amendment of Decision (EU) 2015/1814 as regards the market stability reserve for the buildings, road transport and additional sectors (Decision) – NERUDOVIČ report – 2025/0380 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2026) 151/2.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2026) 214)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2026) 214 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 22 April 2026.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2026) 105 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 20 and 26 April 2026.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2026) 106 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 20 and 26 April 2026.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2026) 107 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 20 and 26 April 2026 archived in Decide.

6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED

(SEC(2026) 108 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 27 April and 1 May 2026, and of the finalisation written procedure.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2026) 109 AND /2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**(PERS(2026) 35 AND /2)**

In the absence of Mr SERAFIN, the Secretary-General presented four additional proposals for administrative decisions which were tabled directly to the College for approval. It was proposed: (i) to second Ms Sabine WEYAND to the European University Institute; (ii) to transfer Ms Ditte JUUL-JØRGENSEN to the post of Director-General at the Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security; (iii) to transfer Ms Céline GAUER to the post of Director-General at the Directorate-General for Energy; and (iv) to designate Mr Declan COSTELLO as acting Director-General of the Reform and Investment Task Force at the Secretariat-General.

7.1. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART, TRANSFER OF AN OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS, AND SECONDMENT OF AN AD16 OFFICIAL IN THE INTEREST OF THE SERVICE UNDER ARTICLES 37 AND 38 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, the Commission decided:

- to create a temporary post of adviser *hors classe* for European Strategic Partnerships, reporting directly to the Secretary-General; this post would be abolished upon the departure of the job-holder;
- to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Sabine WEYAND, currently Director-General at the Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security, to this newly created temporary post;
- to second Ms Sabine WEYAND, in the interest of the service pursuant to Article 37(a) and Article 38 of the Staff Regulations, to the European University Institute, with a date of effect to be determined later

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in view of the academic year 2026/2027, and for a period ending on 31 July 2027. The Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security was responsible for taking the necessary operational measures in accordance with Commission Decision C(2013) 5555 on Administrative Aspects of External Mobility.

Unless otherwise indicated, these decisions would take effect on 1 June 2026.

7.2. DG TRADE AND ECONOMIC SECURITY – TRANSFER IN THE INTEREST OF THE SERVICE, UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS, OF AN AD16 OFFICIAL

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr ŠEFČOVIČ and Mr JØRGENSEN, the Commission decided to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Ditte JUUL-JØRGENSEN, currently Director-General at the Directorate-General for Energy, to the post of Director-General at the Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security.

This decision would take effect on 1 June 2026.

7.3. DG ENERGY – TRANSFER IN THE INTEREST OF THE SERVICE, UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS, OF AN AD16 OFFICIAL

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr JØRGENSEN, the Commission decided to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Céline GAUER, currently Director-General of the Reform and Investment Task Force (SG REFORM), to the post of Director-General at the Directorate-General for Energy.

This decision would take effect on 1 June 2026.

**7.4. REFORM AND INVESTMENT TASK FORCE – AUTHORISATION OF THE INTERNAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD15/16, OF A DIRECTOR-GENERAL POST AND APPOINTMENT OF AN ACTING DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2026) 38)**

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided:

- to authorise the internal publication, with immediate effect, of the vacancy notice for the post of Director-General of the Reform and Investment Task Force in PERS(2026) 38, in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations;
- to designate, in application of Article 52 of Commission Decision (EU) 2024/3080, Mr Declan COSTELLO as acting Director-General of the Reform and Investment Task Force at the Secretariat-General until the appointment of the new Director-General.

Unless otherwise indicated, these decisions would take effect on 1 June 2026.

**7.5. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14
(PERS(2026) 36 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 ‘Justice Policies’ Directorate at the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (PERS(2026) 36).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 26 February and 18 March 2026 (PERS(2026) 36/2).

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 McGRATH, it then decided to appoint Mr Andreas STEIN to the post.

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

**7.6. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – APPOINTMENT OF A
PRINCIPAL ADVISER AT GRADE AD14
(PERS(2026) 37 AND /2)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Principal Adviser / Director of the European Research Executive Agency (REA) at the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (PERS(2026) 37).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 20 March and 9 April 2026 (PERS(2026) 37/2).

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 Ms ZAHARIEVA, it then decided to appoint Mr Stephen COLLINS to the post.

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

**7.7. ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE COMMISSION MEDIATION
SERVICE FOR 2025
(SEC(2026) 126)**

The Commission took note of the General Activity Report of the Mediation Service of the European Commission for 2025, distributed as SEC(2026) 126.

8. COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION ON ESTABLISHING A COMMON FRAMEWORK FOR EU WIDE AGE VERIFICATION TECHNOLOGIES (C(2026) 4225 AND /2; RCC(2026) 24)

The PRESIDENT introduced the Recommendation on establishing a common framework for EU-wide age-verification technologies for users of online content. This initiative flowed from the Commission's commitment to enhancing protection for minors online and followed up on the priorities set out in her 2025 State of the Union address. She stressed the risks associated with certain functionalities and practices found on digital platforms that had been designed to maximise user engagement. Such practices could have worrying effects on children and teenagers, by encouraging excessive use, increasing their exposure to harmful or illegal content and affecting their mental health and development.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that a Special Panel on Child Safety Online had been set up by the Commission and was to make recommendations by summer 2026. A number of Member States were in the process of exploring various solutions, such as stricter rules on access by minors to certain services or stronger obligations on platforms. In this connection, she stressed the value of an EU age-verification solution, based on lessons learnt from experiences around the world. She especially welcomed the development of a simple application that safeguarded privacy by confirming that users were over a certain age, without revealing personal data beyond what was strictly necessary. The approach drew on the success of the COVID certificates, and the solution had undergone thorough testing to ensure that it was reliable and safe.

Ms VIRKKUNEN described the Recommendation as delivering on the announcement made on 15 April regarding the launch of a European age-verification application, which was now technically ready and could be rolled out in the near future. The solution, that had been tested in several Member States over the last few months, was designed to provide a practical, interoperable, EU-wide age-verification tool for accessing certain services online.

The EU regulatory framework was already in place, specifically the Digital Services Act, under which the protection of minors was a priority. However, practical and technical challenges sometimes stood in the way of enforcing the obligations, even though serious risks persisted, including the risk of minors' accessing adult-only content. Platforms frequently cited the absence of reliable and proportionate technical solutions as justification for their limited verification tools, which undermined the enforcement of existing obligations, including where the platforms' terms and conditions already set a minimum age.

Ms VIRKKUNEN accordingly stressed the twin imperatives for regulators of ensuring better protection for minors while avoiding excessively intrusive methods such as sending identity documents to platforms or using biometric procedures. With this in mind, the Commission had adopted an approach that opted for protecting privacy, preserving user anonymity and keeping data transmission to a minimum by using a system that confirmed that a user was above a certain age without revealing their identity or their precise age.

The Recommendation thus called on Member States to accelerate the rollout of the EU age-verification application and make it available by the end of 2026, either as a stand-alone application or integrated in a European Digital Identity Wallet, or both. The Recommendation also encouraged Member States to establish national systems for issuing proof-of-age attestations.

For its part, the Commission would establish an EU age-verification scheme, and lists of trusted providers and solutions that complied with EU requirements on security, reliability and data protection. Lastly, the open-source publication of the application's code ensured transparency and allowed cybersecurity experts, among others, to test the solution, detect any vulnerabilities and make it more robust.

Following these presentations, the Commission agreed, on a proposal from the PRESIDENT, that the Commission Recommendation in C(2026) 4225/2 would be formally adopted by the finalisation written procedure, the deadline for which was set for Wednesday 29 April 2026 (PE/2026/2817).

**9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – A SIMPLER, CLEARER AND BETTER ENFORCED EU RULEBOOK
(COM(2026) 380 TO /3; RCC(2026) 23)**

The PRESIDENT introduced the Communication presented that day, aimed at making the European Union's legislative process more effective, more efficient and more transparent to the benefit of businesses and citizens. She noted that of the 10 omnibus proposals submitted by the Commission to simplify EU legislation, 3 had already been adopted by the co-legislators, while 7 were still under negotiation. As a whole, they should lead to a EUR 15 billion reduction in administrative costs over time. She highlighted the importance of the regulatory simplification exercise, over the course of which all EU legislative texts would come under scrutiny in order to identify duplications and overlaps, thanks, inter alia, to the use of artificial intelligence. Moreover, she considered that it was vital to apply the principle of 'simplicity by design', which governed the drafting of the future 28th regime and which could act as an example for future proposals.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS explained that the Communication was aimed at modernising the way in which EU laws were designed, implemented and enforced. In turbulent times, it became even more vital to ensure that the rules were clear, agile, fit for purpose and based on sound evidence. The roadmap towards a simpler, clearer and better enforced EU regulatory framework was based on five major policy pillars, which he addressed in greater detail.

The first pillar concerned the principle of 'simplicity by design', whereby EU laws should be easy to understand, implement and enforce. The Commission aimed to embed this principle into every proposal from the outset, ensuring clarity on who must act, how to comply, and the consequences of non-compliance. Mr DOMBROVSKIS pointed out that the Communication called for simpler, clearer and more practical rules, with realistic transposition and implementation deadlines,

that could be effectively enforced. The projected deepening of the single market implied far more systematic use of Regulations and overall harmonisation, while reducing the use of delegated and implementing acts. The ever-changing technological and geopolitical challenges obliged the Commission to design rules that were innovation friendly, and to re-examine and update them where necessary, while ensuring legal certainty to maintain the confidence of investors in the EU.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS explained that the second pillar related to strengthening the better regulation framework, pointing out that, while the EU already had a system widely recognised as an international benchmark, it would be taken a step further to increase its transparency and efficiency as well as the involvement of stakeholders. A broader range of legislative initiatives would be accompanied by more targeted impact assessments using a more proportionate approach, including for proposals regarded as urgent. Derogations would remain possible in exceptional circumstances, but only where the urgency was clearly demonstrated.

He also mentioned that the consultation system would become more efficient and flexible thanks to optimised timing and improved coordination. This would ensure that a variety of opinions were considered while avoiding excessive consultation. In addition, he noted that the principles of better regulation should not apply solely to the Commission, and that the European Parliament and the Council would also be called upon to assess the impact of any significant legislative amendments they tabled. The three institutions should agree on a shared understanding of what constituted a significant amendment and apply a simple method for calculating costs.

The third pillar consisted of an action plan for regulatory deep cleaning, aimed at rationalising the EU rulebook in force. The plan would target fragmented rules and inconsistent and redundant provisions, and would reduce complexity in 12 priority areas, ranging from free movement of goods and services to housing and permitting, areas that would be examined as a matter of priority in 2026 and 2027. The plan would improve regulatory effectiveness and coherence, and could lead to measures to simplify EU legislation and consolidate disparate areas thereof. These efforts would be supported by a high-level stakeholder group, the Simplification Platform,

made up of representatives from different fields, including civil society and small businesses.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS explained that the fourth pillar would be dedicated to tackling regulatory gold-plating, or over-transposition, where, all too frequently, Member States introduced stricter rules or adopted a broader scope, beyond the requirements of the EU legal act, thus giving rise to additional obstacles, adding to costs and fragmenting the single market. The Commission would support Member States in their commitment to avoid gold-plating through a toolkit with best practices and transposition guidance, including better detection of instances of gold-plating and follow-up, through the European Semester and the Single Market Enforcement Taskforce.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS then turned to the fifth pillar which concerned the swifter and more rigorous implementation of European legislation. The Commission would strengthen enforcement of the single market rulebook in selected policy areas. The approach would be updated, based on faster procedures, a more systematic response, more dissuasive penalties and priority given to reducing the length of infringement cases. In addition, 11 single market focus areas had been identified for stepped-up enforcement.

To conclude, he held that the Communication presented was perfectly in line with the EU's competitiveness agenda and consistent with the Commission's commitment to better law-making. He further considered that the Communication was in line with the call by European leaders for regulatory simplification and sent a positive signal to EU businesses and foreign investors.

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

- strong support for the built-in 'simplicity by default' approach, starting with the drafting of texts;

- the observation that many of the rules had been watered down by the co-legislators during interinstitutional negotiations, in particular through the introduction of derogations, which were exceptions that undermined the harmonisation sought at European level;
- on the matter of infringements, a reminder of the need for absolute consistency and the importance of equal treatment for all Member States;
- a particular concern regarding digital rules and the intended level of harmonisation in the financial sector, which was highly vulnerable to regulatory divergence;
- a reminder of the need to maintain public trust in better regulation and the importance of following up on the aspects highlighted by the European Ombudsman;
- concerns about the frequent use of derogations from the obligation to carry out impact assessments, given the need for decisions made at European level to be based on evidence and tangible facts in order to ensure their credibility;
- the observation that Member States seeking to impose national rules were heavily over-regulating to the detriment of harmonisation and EU interests, using the subsidiarity argument to justify measures at national level;
- a call for greater rigour in the internal implementation of the applicable rules, and the usefulness of better integrating the Regulatory Scrutiny Board into the initial assessment process, in particular to avoid longer procedural timelines.

The PRESIDENT noted that concerns about the heavy European administrative burden were not unfounded, especially when they came from businesses. She stressed that the policy dialogues had been launched more than a year ago to allow businesses and other stakeholders to express their views and submit concrete proposals. The Commission now had solid data and precise figures which had to be used in exchanges with the Member States. She concluded by saying that the

Commission should use the current momentum to show what progress had been made and to make full use of all levers for action.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2026) 380/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1. INFORMAL MEETING OF HEADS OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT

The PRESIDENT informed the College of the outcome of the informal meeting of the European Council held in Cyprus on 23 and 24 April with the participation of the President of Ukraine, Mr Volodymyr Zelenskyy. She welcomed the fact that the EU had finally approved the EUR 90 billion loan to support Ukraine and had also adopted the 20th package of sanctions against Russia. She noted that Russia was increasingly moving towards a war economy and was currently outpacing the EU in terms of military capability production. However, she also mentioned signs of increasing domestic pressure on the regime, in particular in response to restrictions on internet access and the prohibition of certain communication tools.

As regards the Middle East, EU leaders had addressed the implications of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz for the EU's energy security. Building on the Commission's recent policy debate on this subject and on the Commission 'AccelerateEU' Communication, the discussions had focused on a two-stage approach combining targeted, temporary and timely measures and structural efforts to reduce dependence on energy imports and boost investment in renewable energy.

The PRESIDENT then referred to the debates on the EU's overall budgetary situation and the negotiations on the 2028-2034 Multiannual Financial

Framework (MFF), in particular the issue of the repayment of NextGenerationEU and the importance of new own resources. Without these resources, the EU would have to choose between significant cuts in funding for existing programmes or an increase in Member State contributions.

The PRESIDENT also mentioned the in-depth discussion held by the European Council on Article 42(7) of the Treaty on European Union, which established an obligation of mutual assistance between Member States. The practical arrangements, including the timing and scope of this assistance, still needed to be clarified.

Lastly, she reported that a working lunch with key regional partners in the Middle East, held on 24 April, had been positive and constructive. In particular, these partners had expressed their appreciation for the EU's immediate support and solidarity after Iran's attacks against their countries.

The Commission took note of this information.

10.2. MISSION TO THE UNITED STATES

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ informed the College of the results of his latest mission to the United States, which had taken place over the previous weekend. He had met several representatives of the US administration and Congress, as well as business leaders. The general feeling amongst all interlocutors was that the transatlantic relationship remained very important both strategically and economically.

Representatives of the US administration welcomed the cooperation between the EU and the US on critical raw materials. Next step would be to identify tangible projects to implement. Further exchanges were expected regarding export controls on critical technologies. They showed strong interest in launching a structured digital dialogue, highlighting the need to set up technical teams to move forward on identified priorities. They also emphasised the importance of the EU delivering on the EU-US tariffs and

trade deal by July 2026. The treatment of steel and aluminium derivatives was raised in this context, along with the need to protect the EU steel industry from global overcapacity.

Beyond trade, discussions also touched upon broader international matters, in particular the conflict in the Middle East, the Russian war against Ukraine and relations with China. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ concluded by saying that the US administration regarded the EU as an important partner and that there was a desire to strengthen cooperation.

The PRESIDENT stressed the importance of favouring a constructive working relationship with the US administration. As regards the EU's relations with China, she pointed out that the College would hold a policy debate on 29 May in order to prepare for the discussion scheduled for the next European Council meeting in June. She added that relations with China would also be discussed at the G7 meeting scheduled for mid-June.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 14.15.