



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

**PV(2021) 2384 final**

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

Brussels, 20 July 2021

# TEXTE EN

## MINUTES

**of the 2384<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Commission**

**held in Brussels**

**(Berlaymont)**

**on Wednesday 30 June 2021**

**(morning)**

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**PV(2021) 2384 final**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |            |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Attendance list</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>5-6</b> |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |            |
| 1. AGENDAS (OJ(2021) 2384/FINAL; SEC(2021) 2384/FINAL) .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 7          |
| 2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET (RCC(2021) 2384) .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 7          |
| 3. APPROVAL OF THE 2380 <sup>TH</sup> , 2381 <sup>ST</sup> , 2382 <sup>ND</sup> AND 2383 <sup>RD</sup> MEETINGS<br>OF THE COMMISSION (2, 8, 15 AND 23 JUNE 2021) .....                                                                                                                                    | 7          |
| 4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2021) 139) .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 7          |
| 5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2021) 33).....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 11         |
| 6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION<br>OF POWERS.....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 12         |
| 6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2021) 244 ET SEQ.).....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 12         |
| 6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2021) 245 ET SEQ.) .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 12         |
| 6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2021) 246 ET SEQ.) .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | 12         |
| 6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2021) 247 AND /2) .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 12         |
| 6.5. GRANTING OF EMPOWERMENTS AND DELEGATIONS OF POWER RELATING<br>TO THE ADOPTION OF CERTAIN MEASURES UNDER THE EU EMISSION<br>TRADING SYSTEM ESTABLISHED BY DIRECTIVE 2003/87/EC OF THE<br>EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, AND AMENDING<br>COMMISSION DECISION C(2015) 9362 (C(2021) 4677)..... | 12         |
| 7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2021) 248).....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 13         |
| 7.1. DG BUDGET – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART,<br>TERMINATION OF THE SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR A PRINCIPAL<br>ADVISER POST AND AUTHORISATION FOR THE INTERNAL AND<br>INTERINSTITUTIONAL (AT AD15/16 GRADE) AND EXTERNAL (AT AD15                                                                     |            |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| GRADE) PUBLICATION OF A POST OF ADVISER HORS CLASSE<br>(PERS(2021) 37; PERS(2021) 58).....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | 13 |
| 7.2. DG FINANCIAL STABILITY, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CAPITAL MARKETS<br>UNION – APPOINTMENT OF AN AD14/15 PRINCIPAL ADVISER<br>(PERS(2021) 59 TO /3).....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 14 |
| 7.3. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – TERMINATION OF THE SELECTION<br>PROCEDURE FOR AN AD14/15 PRINCIPAL ADVISER POST, AND<br>AUTHORISATION FOR A NEW INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF THE POST<br>(PERS(2021) 7; PERS(2021) 60).....                                                                                                                                                                       | 15 |
| 7.4. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL<br>ADVISERS TO THE COMMISSION (PERS(2021) 61).....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 15 |
| 7.5. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDENT OF THE<br>EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL (ERC) (C(2021) 5000).....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 16 |
| 7.6. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – COMMISSION DECISIONS ON POST TERM-OF-<br>OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF TWO FORMER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION<br>(C(2021) 9013; C(2021) 9014).....                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | 16 |
| 8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN<br>PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND<br>SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS –<br>A LONG-TERM VISION FOR THE EU’S RURAL AREAS –<br>TOWARDS STRONGER, CONNECTED, RESILIENT AND<br>PROSPEROUS RURAL AREAS BY 2040 (COM(2021) 345 TO /3;<br>SWD(2021) 166 AND /2; SWD(2021) 167 AND /2, RCC(2021) 148) ..... | 17 |
| 9. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN<br>PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON GENERAL PRODUCT<br>SAFETY, AMENDING REGULATION (EU) NO 1025/2012 OF THE<br>EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, AND<br>REPEALING COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 87/357/EEC AND DIRECTIVE<br>2001/95/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE<br>COUNCIL (COM(2021) 346 TO /3; SWD(2021) 168; SWD(2021) 169;            |    |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| SEC(2021) 280).....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | 20 |
| 10. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT<br>AND OF THE COUNCIL ON CONSUMER CREDITS<br>(COM(2021) 347 AND /2; SWD(2021) 170; SWD(2021) 171;<br>SEC(2021) 281; RCC(2021) 146).....                                                                                                                   | 21 |
| 11. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION ON THE EUROPEAN<br>CITIZENS' INITIATIVE (ECI) 'END THE CAGE AGE' (C(2021) 4747<br>AND /2; RCC(2021) 147).....                                                                                                                                                               | 26 |
| 12. OTHER BUSINESS.....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 29 |
| 12.1. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR<br>REGISTRATION OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'SAVE<br>CRUELTY-FREE COSMETICS – COMMIT TO A EUROPE WITHOUT ANIMAL<br>TESTING' PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN<br>PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL (C(2021) 4950)..... | 29 |
| 12.2. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR<br>REGISTRATION OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED<br>'EUROPEAN ECOSCORE' PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF<br>THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL (C(2021) 4951).....                                                          | 29 |
| 12.3. SECOND ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO SUPPORT THE RECOVERY IN EUROPE<br>(NEXTGENERATIONEU TRANSACTION) .....                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 31 |
| 12.4. POLITICAL AGREEMENT ON THE REFORM OF THE COMMON<br>AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP) .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 32 |

**Single sitting: Wednesday 30 June 2021 (morning)**

The sitting opened at 9.11 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

**Present:**

|                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Ms von der LEYEN | President                |
| Mr TIMMERMANS    | Executive Vice-President |
| Ms VESTAGER      | Executive Vice-President |
| Mr DOMBROVSKIS   | Executive Vice-President |
| Mr ŠEFČOVIČ      | Vice-President           |
| Ms JOUROVÁ       | Vice-President           |
| Ms ŠUICA         | Vice-President           |
| Mr SCHINAS       | Vice-President           |
| Mr HAHN          | Member                   |
| Ms GABRIEL       | Member                   |
| Mr SCHMIT        | Member                   |
| Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI | Member                   |
| Mr BRETON        | Member                   |
| Ms FERREIRA      | Member                   |
| Ms KYRIAKIDES    | Member                   |
| Mr REYNDERS      | Member                   |
| Ms DALLI         | Member                   |
| Ms JOHANSSON     | Member                   |
| Ms VÁLEAN        | Member                   |
| Mr VÁRHELYI      | Member                   |
| Ms URPILAINEN    | Member                   |
| Ms SIMSON        | Member                   |
| Mr SINKEVIČIUS   | Member                   |
| Ms McGUINNESS    | Member                   |

(30 June 2021)

Absent:

|                        |                                         |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES | High Representative /<br>Vice-President |
| Mr GENTILONI           | Member                                  |
| Mr LENARČIČ            | Member                                  |

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

|            |                                 |                                      |
|------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Mr SERRANO | Chef de cabinet to Mr BORRELL   |                                      |
| Mr BUTI    | Chef de cabinet to Mr GENTILONI | Items 1 to 12 (in part)              |
| Ms SIMKIĆ  | Chef de Cabinet to Mr LENARČIČ  | Items 8 to 9/10 (in part), 11 and 12 |

The following also sat in:

|                      |                                                                             |                  |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Mr SEIBERT           | Chef de Cabinet to the PRESIDENT                                            |                  |
| Mr CALLEJA CRESPO    | Director-General, Legal Service                                             |                  |
| Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN | Director-General, DG Communication                                          |                  |
| Mr MAMER             | Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission |                  |
| Ms PETKOVA           | Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office       |                  |
| Ms HILI              | Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office                                           | Items 9 and 10   |
| Ms SCHULTZ           | Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office                                |                  |
| Mr SMITH             | Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office                                | Item 8           |
| Mr SAMPEDRO MARCOS   | Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office                                | Items 11 to 12.2 |

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

**1. AGENDAS**

**(OJ(2021) 2384/FINAL; SEC(2021) 2384/FINAL)**

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

**2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET**

**(RCC(2021) 2384)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 28 June 2021.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE 2380<sup>TH</sup>, 2381<sup>ST</sup>, 2382<sup>ND</sup> AND 2383<sup>RD</sup> MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (2, 8, 15 AND 23 JUNE 2021)**

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2380<sup>th</sup>, 2381<sup>st</sup>, 2382<sup>nd</sup> and 2383<sup>rd</sup> meetings.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS**

**(RCC(2021) 139)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 25 June 2021 (RCC(2021) 139).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Brexit Adjustment Reserve (Regulation) – ARIMONT report – 2020/0380 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 211.

- **Amendment of Directive 1999/62/EC on the charging of heavy goods vehicles for the use of certain infrastructures (Directive) – FERRANDINO report – 2017/0114 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 187.

- **General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030 (Decision) – O'SULLIVAN report – 2020/0300 (COD)**

Line set out in SP(2021) 447/2.

- **Amendment of Directive (EU) 2017/2397 as regards the transitional measures for the recognition of third countries certificates (Directive) – AMERIKS report – 2021/0039 (COD)**

Line set out in SP(2021) 445.

- **Credit servicers, credit purchasers and the recovery of collateral (Directive) – DE LANGE & TINAGLI report – 2018/0063A (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 213.

- **Amendment of Directive 2009/103/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 16 September 2009 relating to insurance against civil liability in respect of the use of motor vehicles, and the enforcement of the obligation to ensure against such liability (Directive) – CHARANZOVÁ report – 2018/0168 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 216.

- **Pilot regime on distributed ledger technology market infrastructures (Regulation) – VAN OVERTVELDT report – 2020/0267 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 217.

- **Amendment of Council Regulation (EU) 2020/1706 as regards inclusion of autonomous Union tariff quotas for certain fishery products (Council Regulation) – 2021/0143 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 215.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2016/794, as regards Europol's cooperation with private parties, the processing of personal data by Europol in support of criminal investigations, and Europol's role on research and innovation cooperation (Regulation) – ZARZALEJOS report – 2020/0349 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 218.

- **Amendment of Directive 2006/112/EC as regards exemptions on importations and on certain supplies, in respect of Union measures in the public interest (Council Directive) – TINAGLI report – 2021/0097 (CNS)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 219/2.

- **Amendment of Directive 2011/24/EU on health technology assessment (Regulation) – WÖLKEN report – 2018/0018 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 221.

- **Oral question O-000031/2021 – A new ERA (European Research Area) for Research and Innovation – 2021/2524 (RSP)**

Line set out in SP(2021) 444/2.

- **Oral question O-000045/2021 – MeToo and the consequences in the institutions – 2021/2730 (RSP)**

Line set out in SP(2021) 442/2.

- **EU Restrictive measures clause for Financial Framework Partnership Agreements with entities implementing Union funds in indirect management – European Bank for Reconstruction and Development**

Line set out in SPI(2021) 33/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Establishment of the Asylum and Migration Fund (Regulation) – FAJON report – 2018/0248 (COD)**
- **Establishment, as part of the Integrated Border Management Fund, of the instrument for financial support for border management and visa (Regulation) – FAJON report – 2018/0249 (COD)**

Compromise texts in SP(2021) 455, further to COM(2021) 325, which the Commission had already approved on 21 June 2021, and in SP(2021) 456, further to COM(2021) 331, which the Commission had already approved on 21 June 2021.

- **Establishment of an Internal Security Fund (Regulation) – HOHLMEIER report – 2018/0250 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2021) 449, further to note COM(2021) 330, which the Commission had already approved on 21 June 2021.

- **Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 – Establishment of the Connecting Europe Facility and repeal of Regulations (EU) No 1316/2013 and (EU) No 283/2014 (Regulation) – MARINESCU, RIQUET & VIRKKUNEN report – 2018/0228 (COD)**

- **Streamlining measures for advancing the realisation of the trans-European transport network (Regulation) – RIQUET report – 2018/0138 (COD)**

Compromise texts in SP(2021) 453, further to COM(2021) 309, which the Commission had already approved on 15 June 2021, and in SP(2021) 454, further to COM(2021) 310, which the Commission had already approved on 15 June 2021.

- **European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 (Regulation) – MATO report – 2018/0210 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2021) 450, further to note COM(2021) 311, which the Commission had already approved on 18 June 2021.

- **Temporary derogation from certain provisions of Directive 2002/58/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 12 July 2002 as regards the use of technologies by providers of number-independent interpersonal communications services for the processing of personal and other data for the purpose of combating online child sexual abuse (Regulation) – SIPPEL report – 2020/0259 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2021) 446, further to note SI(2021) 131/2, which the Commission had already approved on 12 May 2021.

- **Results of Parliament's June II 2021 part-session**

Information set out in SP(2021) 430.

## **5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2021) 33)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2021) 33 of the

meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held by videoconference on Wednesday 23 June 2021.

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

### **6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED**

**(SEC(2021) 244 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 21 and 25 June 2021.

### **6.2. EMPOWERMENT**

**(SEC(2021) 245 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 21 and 25 June 2021.

### **6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS**

**(SEC(2021) 246 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 21 and 25 June 2021 archived in Decide.

### **6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES**

**(SEC(2021) 247 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 28 June and 2 July 2021.

### **6.5. GRANTING OF EMPOWERMENTS AND DELEGATIONS OF POWER RELATING TO THE ADOPTION OF CERTAIN MEASURES UNDER THE EU EMISSION TRADING SYSTEM ESTABLISHED BY**

***DIRECTIVE 2003/87/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF  
THE COUNCIL, AND AMENDING COMMISSION DECISION  
C(2015) 9362  
(C(2021) 4677)***

The Commission adopted the decision in C(2021) 4677.

The Commission decided to grant empowerments to the Member of the Commission with responsibility for Climate Action, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and delegations of powers to the Director-General of DG Climate Action, with a view to adopting, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, certain measures under the EU emission trading system established by Directive 2003/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, and amending Commission Decision C(2015) 9362, subject to the conditions set out in the Decision.

**7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS**

**(SEC(2021) 248)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

**(PERS(2021) 57)**

***7.1. DG BUDGET – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART,  
TERMINATION OF THE SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR A  
PRINCIPAL ADVISER POST AND AUTHORISATION FOR THE  
INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL (AT AD15/16 GRADE) AND  
EXTERNAL (AT AD15 GRADE) PUBLICATION OF A POST OF  
ADVISER HORS CLASSE***

***(PERS(2021) 37; PERS(2021) 58)***

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

- to approve the abolition of the post of Principal Adviser in charge of ‘Asset & Debt Management’;
- to terminate with immediate effect the selection procedure related thereto (PERS(2021) 37);
- to approve the creation of a temporary post of adviser hors classe in order to serve as the contact point for providing strategic advice on the implementation and possible evolution of the EU’s diversified funding strategy, and carry out communication actions geared towards investors;
- to authorise the internal and interinstitutional (at AD15/16 grade) and external (at AD15 grade) publication of the vacancy notice in PERS(2021) 58 for the newly created post of adviser hors classe, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.2. DG FINANCIAL STABILITY, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CAPITAL MARKETS UNION – APPOINTMENT OF AN AD14/15 PRINCIPAL ADVISER**  
**(PERS(2021) 59 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the permanent post of Principal Adviser in charge of ‘Resources (Finance - IT)’ in DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union (PERS(2021) 59).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 19 May and 10 June 2021 (PERS(2021) 59/2 and /3).

The Commission then examined the applicants’ qualifications for the post. It also considered their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a

proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms McGUINNESS, it then decided to appoint Ms Elisabetta SIRACUSA to the post.

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

**7.3. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – TERMINATION OF THE SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR AN AD14/15 PRINCIPAL ADVISER POST, AND AUTHORISATION FOR A NEW INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF THE POST  
(PERS(2021) 7; PERS(2021) 60)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms KYRIAKIDES, the Commission decided:

- to terminate, with immediate effect, the selection procedure for the post of Principal Adviser seconded in the interest of the service to the European Health and Digital Executive Agency (HaDEA) to serve as the Director of the Agency (PERS(2021) 7), without making an appointment;
- to authorise a new internal publication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2021) 60.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.4. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL ADVISERS TO THE COMMISSION  
(PERS(2021) 61)**

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

- to adopt the list of special advisers to the Members of the Commission, which was valid, unless stated otherwise, from the date of effect of these

decisions until 31 March 2022, as set out in PERS(2021) 61;

- by way of derogation from the provisions under point 6, second paragraph, of Commission Decision C(2007) 6655 of 19 December 2007 on the rules on special advisers to the Commission, to authorise Mr HAHN, the Member of the Commission responsible for the Budget and Human Resources, to conclude addenda to the existing contracts in the event of duly justified and urgent needs, subject to the availability of sufficient budgetary appropriations;
- to authorise the Director-General of DG Human Resources and Security to implement this decision by signing contracts of employment on behalf of the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.5. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – APPOINTMENT OF PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL (ERC) (C(2021) 5000)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission adopted the decision presented by Ms GABRIEL, in agreement with Ms VESTAGER, as set out in document C(2021) 5000. It decided to appoint Ms Maria LEPTIN to the post of President of the European Research Council.

This decision would take effect on 1 October 2021.

**7.6. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – COMMISSION DECISIONS ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF TWO FORMER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION (C(2021) 9013; C(2021) 9014)**

The Commission adopted the Decisions set out in C(2021) 9013 and

C(2021) 9014.

The Commission specifically decided that the professional activities envisaged by Mr Günther OETTINGER and Ms Violeta BULC, after leaving office as Members of the Commission, were compatible with Article 245(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and with the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, subject to certain specific conditions and obligations.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – A LONG-TERM VISION FOR THE EU’S RURAL AREAS – TOWARDS STRONGER, CONNECTED, RESILIENT AND PROSPEROUS RURAL AREAS BY 2040  
(COM(2021) 345 TO /3; SWD(2021) 166 AND /2; SWD(2021) 167 AND /2, RCC(2021) 148)**

The PRESIDENT introduced the communication entitled ‘A long-term vision for the EU’s rural areas – Towards stronger, connected, resilient and prosperous rural areas by 2040’.

She noted that this was an important communication, considering that 30% of the EU’s population lived in rural areas and that rural dwellers often felt ignored or neglected. She invited Ms ŠUICA, Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI and Ms FERREIRA to present the initiative in greater depth.

Ms ŠUICA highlighted that the communication set out a vision for the future that saw almost all EU policies being used for the exclusive benefit of rural areas.

The communication was also important from a demographic standpoint, given that almost one third of the EU's people lived in rural areas. Some of these areas were facing dramatic population decline, and in many cases the remaining population was ageing tangibly. Moreover, the EU's 137 million rural dwellers felt left behind. The geographic divide that had formerly characterised Europe had now been replaced by an urban-rural divide.

With this vision, the Commission was launching a new rural pact that would bring together national, regional and local authorities at all levels and involve all the relevant players and stakeholders. The communication examined the different challenges facing rural areas – such as demographic change, a lack of connectivity, and limited access to services – in order to encourage their transformation into attractive, dynamic places, while also preserving their essential character.

The vision contained in the communication was structured around four pillars and underpinned by an action plan articulated around a series of flagship initiatives. It would serve as a roadmap for the next twenty years. The communication also provided for tools to aid the vision's implementation. These included rural proofing, the EU rural observatory, and a toolkit to ensure better use of EU funds to support rural areas.

Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI noted that the protection and promotion of rural areas was enshrined in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, but that many remote areas of Europe had been abandoned to their fate. Yet rural areas, which suffered as a result of regional disparities, were an integral part of the European way of life.

The long-term vision being presented that day set out the main challenges that rural areas faced, while also seeking to leverage their most promising strengths. It was based on a comprehensive foresight exercise and in-depth analysis conducted by the Commission.

Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI stressed that supporting EU farmers was an investment in European society as a whole and highlighted the contributions that cohesion policy and the common agricultural policy could make from this point of view. He concluded by stating that the vision of rural areas contained in the communication would only become a reality if national, regional and local stakeholders worked together to make it so.

Ms FERREIRA reiterated that rural dwellers felt they had been forgotten. She observed that the proximity to critical services such as high-quality education and healthcare infrastructure played a central role in integration and cohesion, but that these were often the preserve of urban areas.

Rural areas were highly diverse and had different strengths that they could turn to their advantage, be it in the technological sector, with renewable energy, in the bioeconomy or in sustainable tourism. It was therefore important to devise an action plan and rural pact that would enable each rural area to capitalise on its strengths in the most appropriate way.

Finally, Ms FERREIRA noted that cohesion policy had made a substantial contribution to the development of rural areas: 25% of the 2014-2020 cohesion fund budget had been allocated to these areas.

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

- the College supported the communication, highlighting that it was desirable, politically important and forward-looking;
- there was a new trend towards residential development in rural areas – this was fuelled by the COVID-19 pandemic and was driving up house prices in these areas;

- as a result, residential development could end up competing with agricultural development in rural areas;
- however, the COVID-19 pandemic had led to the adoption of new working arrangements (especially telework) and there was a growing tendency among urban dwellers, including younger people, to choose to live in the countryside, a development which could represent an opportunity for rural areas;
- for rural areas to make the most of these opportunities, their connectivity had to be improved, including for education and healthcare, and their satellite coverage needed to be enhanced, particularly in remote areas;
- it was vital to support tourism and hospitality in rural areas, as the pandemic had hit these sectors especially hard.

The PRESIDENT thanked Ms ŠUICA, Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI and Ms FERREIRA for their excellent work.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the communication in COM(2021) 345/3 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, together with the staff working documents distributed as SWD(2021) 166/2 and SWD(2021) 167/2, the contents of which were noted.

**9. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON GENERAL PRODUCT SAFETY, AMENDING REGULATION (EU) NO 1025/2012 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, AND REPEALING COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 87/357/EEC AND DIRECTIVE 2001/95/EC OF THE EUROPEAN**

**PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL**

**(COM(2021) 346 TO /3; SWD(2021) 168; SWD(2021) 169; SEC(2021) 280)**

**10. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON CONSUMER CREDITS**

**(COM(2021) 347 AND /2; SWD(2021) 170; SWD(2021) 171; SEC(2021) 281; RCC(2021) 146)**

Ms JOUROVÁ presented the proposal for a Regulation on general product safety and the proposal for a Directive on consumer credit, pointing out that these proposals were necessary.

These two acts would strengthen consumer protection on two fronts: by helping consumers avoid the risks associated with taking out loans, and by putting in place even stricter product safety rules.

The proposal for a product safety regulation addressed the risks associated with new technological products (for example cybersecurity) and online sales, and set out product safety rules for online marketplaces. The new proposal would ensure the safety of all products intended for EU consumers, whether these products were offered on online marketplaces or in local shops, and whether they came from the EU or from third countries, fully in line with the Commission's legislative proposal on digital services (Digital Services Act – DSA).

Ms JOUROVÁ added that the system for the rapid exchange of information on dangerous products, RAPEX, would be renamed the 'Safety Gate' and that the proposal established a more efficient and faster flow of information between the Commission, the Member State authorities and citizens. She also noted that the rules set out were aligned with those recently adopted on market surveillance and that the level of harmonised protection would be increased by the move from a Directive to a Regulation. Lastly, she stressed that the proposal constituted general legislation and would be applied only in the absence of sectoral legislation on specific products such as toys or medicines.

Turning to the proposal for a directive on credit, she said it would strengthen consumer protection by providing consumers with clearer information on the loans they took out. It would improve the rules for assessing the creditworthiness of consumers, in other words their ability to repay the credit, with a view to avoiding over-indebtedness, and would encourage Member States to promote financial education and ensure consumers had broader access to debt advisory services. Ms JOUROVÁ also said that the proposal included new market developments such as peer-to-peer online lending and provided for a longer transition period for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to enable them to adapt more easily to the new rules. Lastly, she stressed that the scope of the original directive had been enlarged by abolishing the existing lower limit of EUR 200 so as to protect consumers even when borrowing small amounts.

Winding up her presentation, Ms JOUROVÁ considered that these two proposals would raise the already strong protection of EU consumers to an even higher level – updated, modernised, better adapted to the digital age and more efficient.

Mr REYNDERS said that these two proposals were essential to protect consumers from two major challenges: first, growing digitalisation, which led to new connected products, the proliferation of online purchases and the taking out of online loans, and second, the need to learn from the current pandemic, which had given rise to mass offers of dangerous products and had negatively impacted consumers' financial situations.

The current text of the General Product Safety Directive had provided an excellent shield against dangerous products, but the EU's capacity to effectively ensure the safety of products moving within its borders largely depended on improvements to the rules and to control of sales channels on online marketplaces.

Bearing in mind that the problem to be addressed went beyond product safety and was also dealt with in the general rules of the legislation on digital services, it was important to ensure that the proposal for a regulation set out a horizontal approach

while laying down specific obligations with regard to product safety. Thus, the proposal was the first to complete the approach set out in the Digital Services Act, thereby highlighting the coherence of the Commission's different policies in this area.

The proposed regulation would therefore bring important benefits to consumers, while introducing a level playing field for economic operators and online marketplaces.

Mr REYNDERS explained that the current legislation was incomplete in cases where consumers bought dangerous non-harmonised products directly from an online shop located outside the EU. He mentioned the example of electric adapters that could cause fires and were sold by online marketplaces located in third countries outside the EU's jurisdiction. Accordingly, under that day's proposal all economic operators offering EU consumers non-harmonised consumer products that came within the scope of the regulation would have to designate a responsible person in EU territory, who would have to cooperate with market surveillance authorities in the event of safety issues with the products concerned.

He added that the proposal for a regulation on general product safety also addressed the safety of new technological products, the definition of which had to be expanded to include cybersecurity.

By way of illustration, he cited the case of a connected watch for children which had been notified in the Safety Gate alert system in 2019. The authorities had decided to withdraw it from the market because the lack of a sufficient safety mechanism could pose a risk to the safety of children wearing it.

Mr REYNDERS also stressed the importance of improving market surveillance rules and strengthening synergies between the general product safety rules and the corresponding rules of the harmonised legislation. Several provisions of the proposed regulation, particularly on market surveillance, were therefore aligned with the recently adopted regulation on harmonised legislation. The proposal took

account of the fact that many aspects of product safety were comprehensively addressed in the harmonised legislation and would therefore not be applied in these areas. The new rules specified this clearly so as to avoid any ambiguity for economic operators.

At the same time, the proposal guaranteed that its general provisions applied when the harmonised legislation did not lay down such complete rules, thereby providing for a flexible and evolving framework. This was the case, for example, for the rules on product recalls; according to some studies, only around 10% of recalled products were actually returned by consumers. The proposal also contained rules to improve communication to consumers in cases of recall, to ensure that dangerous products did not remain with consumers.

Lastly, he said that the proposal therefore contributed to the Commission's objective of better regulation by repealing an old 1987 directive on the safety of products imitating foodstuffs and by including this category of products in the general provisions. This made it possible to reduce regulatory complexity and abolish a piece of EU legislation.

Secondly, Mr REYNDERS referred to the revision of the Consumer Credit Directive, which in 2008 had established a sound harmonised EU framework to ensure fair access to credit for European consumers. The proposal aimed to better protect EU consumers by creating more harmonised conditions for businesses in the light of market developments since the adoption of this framework.

He therefore considered it necessary to amend the scope of the directive to protect consumers taking out online loans, which were not included in the 2008 Directive and could pose risks, for example short-term high-cost loans for small amounts, for which the effective level of interest was often several hundred percent. The directive would also protect borrowers who took out loans through peer-to-peer lending platforms.

Mr REYNDERS added that the directive adapted the rules on pre-contractual

information to take account of digital devices. Under the new proposal, consumers would thus be able to see at a glance all the information they needed to understand the main features of the loan and compare offers.

He added that the proposal also took account of the important lessons learned from the pandemic, which was likely to further aggravate the problems of late payment of invoices and of interest encountered by one in ten European consumers.

He also referred to the reinforced rules proposed for assessing creditworthiness as part of automated data processing, which would better prevent consumer over-indebtedness. For instance, the proposal specified that personal data, for example on social media, should not be used in that assessment.

Mr REYNDERS went on to mention other new measures set out in the proposal such as financial education, encouragement of creditors to exercise forbearance in cases of late payment, and measures concerning debt advice.

Finally, he spoke of the proposed vision of a dynamic single market for consumer credit. This was important if, in the future, online platforms started to offer credit within the European Union just as they were already doing outside it.

In conclusion, Mr REYNDERS felt that the legislative package presented that day should benefit consumers and businesses and help them to exit the current crisis.

The PRESIDENT warmly thanked Ms JOUROVÁ and Mr REYNDERS for the presentation of this dossier.

Following these presentations, the Commission adopted:

- the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2021) 346/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, 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(2021) 168, SWD(2021) 169 and SEC(2021) 280, the contents of which were noted;

- the proposal for a Directive in COM(2021) 347/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, 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(2021) 170, SWD(2021) 171 and SEC(2021) 281, the contents of which were noted.

# **11. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION ON THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE (ECI) 'END THE CAGE AGE' (C(2021) 4747 AND /2; RCC(2021) 147)**

The PRESIDENT asked the Members of the Commission responsible for the 'End the Cage Age' European Citizens' Initiative to present the proposal for a Communication from the Commission.

Mr TIMMERMANS welcomed the Commission's proposed positive response to this European Citizens' Initiative, explaining that this Decision, which reflected the political support, from now on needed to be underpinned by impact assessments in order to have a suitable timeframe and scientific knowledge base when defining the new animal-welfare framework in 2023.

He emphasised the need for the EU to ensure that farmers received sufficient investment support to adapt their farms to the new framework. The EU also needed to discuss the issue with its international trade partners, some of which had already adopted similar measures.

Ms JOUROVÁ also welcomed the fact that the Commission was responding favourably to the European Citizens' Initiative with its announcement of a legislative proposal by 2023. The organisers of the Initiative had conducted a

wide-reaching European campaign which had gathered almost 1.4 million signatures within a year, making it the third-largest ever in terms of signatures collected. This was the sixth Citizens' Initiative to which the Commission had a duty to reply since this instrument of participatory democracy had been introduced in the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Ms JOUROVÁ confirmed that the future legislative proposal would be subject to an in-depth impact assessment and would be accompanied by measures enabling farmers to make the necessary investments in their farms, thereby ending the use of cages for farmed animals by 2027.

Ms KYRIAKIDES stressed that this response from the Commission marked a historic moment for European democracy and for animal welfare in Europe; this was the first time that it would deal with citizens' requests in the Initiative in their entirety. Ending the use of cages was in her view not only a moral and health imperative, but also constituted a measure aimed at preserving the unity of the single market, following on from the commitments made under the 'Farm to Fork' strategy and the European Green Deal.

Ms KYRIAKIDES went on to explain that in the 'Farm to Fork' strategy the Commission had already committed itself to revising the animal-welfare legislation by the end of 2023 on the basis of a fitness check, an impact assessment and scientific opinions from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). In its response to this ECI, the Commission also committed to tabling, by 2023, a legislative proposal to phase out and finally prohibit the use of cage systems for all animals mentioned in the Initiative. The Commission's proposal would concern both animals already covered by legislation and those mentioned in the Initiative but not covered by current legislation. The Commission departments had already asked the EFSA for additional scientific data in order to determine the conditions needed for the prohibition of cages; the EFSA's opinions were expected in the course of 2022 and in early 2023.

It was essential to manage the transition carefully and inclusively, leaving no one behind. The impact of the future legislation on farmers would have to be mitigated, as they would need to make structural changes on their farms. The political agreement concluded a few days previously on reform of the Common Agricultural Policy had come at just the right moment, since it included the issue of animal welfare (see point 12.4 below). The transition also had external and trade dimensions, which would certainly form part of the impact assessment, to determine how the EU could promote global animal-welfare standards and ensure fair treatment for European farmers in international competition.

To conclude, Ms KYRIAKIDES stated that the Commission would start preparatory work now, to enable a legislative proposal to be presented in 2023.

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

- the need for the Commission to respond to the concerns of European citizens regarding animal welfare, whilst avoiding simply transferring the issue of intensive agricultural production to third countries;
- the need for the impact assessment to examine matters relating to the control of animal diseases and their effects on human health, and to land use;
- the fact that the requests made in the Citizens' Initiative were based not only on ethical concerns, but also economic and social issues, as they were aimed at changing the very structure of the European agricultural sector, currently heavily focused on large-scale, intensive production, by moving towards farming methods more in keeping with the principles of sustainable development.

The PRESIDENT concluded by emphasising that the phenomenon of externalising the costs of intensive production outside the EU was a general problem, which also affected other economic sectors; an intelligent approach on the part of the EU would enable it to make the necessary changes for a better world.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in C(2021) 4747/2 and decided to publish it, for information, in the *Official Journal of the European Union*.

## **12. OTHER BUSINESS**

**12.1. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'SAVE CRUELTY-FREE COSMETICS – COMMIT TO A EUROPE WITHOUT ANIMAL TESTING' PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL  
(C(2021) 4950)**

**12.2. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'EUROPEAN ECOSCORE' PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL  
(C(2021) 4951)**

Ms JOUROVÁ presented two draft decisions being tabled for approval by the College concerning the registration of two European citizens' initiatives entitled, in the authentic language (English), 'European EcoScore' and 'Save Cruelty-Free Cosmetics – Commit to a Europe without animal testing'.

In essence, the 'European EcoScore' initiative called on the Commission to propose a reliable European EcoScore, i.e. a mandatory label providing consumers with information about the environmental impact of products manufactured or sold on the EU market. It would apply initially to food and clothing, with the ultimate aim being for it to cover products of all types.

The initiative entitled ‘Save cruelty-free cosmetics – Commit to a Europe without animal testing’ called on the Commission to propose legislation that would strengthen and expand the existing EU bans on animal testing for cosmetics and the placing on the market of ingredients tested on animals. The legislation would phase out all animal testing before the end of the Commission’s current term of office.

Ms JOUROVÁ pointed out that the College’s task that day was to decide only on the registration of the initiatives and not at this stage to analyse their substance or political expediency.

She explained that the conditions for registering European citizens’ initiatives were set out in Article 6(3) of Regulation (EU) 2019/788 of 17 April 2019 on the European citizens’ initiative, which had repealed and replaced Regulation (EU) No 211/2011 with effect from 1 January 2020. One of those conditions was the requirement that no part of the citizens’ initiative should manifestly fall outside the framework of the Commission’s powers to submit a proposal for an EU legal act for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

She noted that the request made by the promoters of the European citizens’ initiative ‘European EcoScore’ fell within the Commission’s powers to propose legal acts for the purpose of implementing the Treaties under Articles 114 and 192 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Similarly, she noted that the request made by the promoters of the ‘Save cruelty-free cosmetics – Commit to a Europe without animal testing’ initiative fell within the Commission’s powers to propose legal acts for the purpose of implementing the Treaties under Article 114 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Ms JOUROVÁ underlined that if, within a period of twelve months, the proposals gathered the minimum support required, in other words at least one million signatures from citizens of at least a quarter of the Member States, the

Commission would then analyse the substance of the proposals.

In accordance with the new Regulation (EU) 2019/788, proposed initiatives registered now benefited from more user-friendly arrangements for organisers to gather support and easier access for European citizens. The Commission would have a period of six months to submit its reasoned decision whether or not to take any action.

Following this presentation, the Commission confirmed that the European citizens' initiatives entitled 'European EcoScore' and 'Save cruelty-free cosmetics – Commit to a Europe without animal testing' met the conditions for registration. It therefore decided to adopt the two implementing decisions set out in documents C(2021) 4951 and C(2021) 4950, and to notify the groups of organisers. It authorised Ms JOUROVÁ to sign the replies on behalf of the College in the authentic language (English) and send them to the organisers of the initiatives.

### **12.3. SECOND ISSUANCE OF BONDS TO SUPPORT THE RECOVERY IN EUROPE (NEXTGENERATIONEU TRANSACTION)**

Mr HAHN informed the College of the outcome of the second issuance of bonds by the Commission as part of the financing arrangements for the EU's recovery plan, *NextGenerationEU*. The previous day, the Commission had raised EUR 15 billion. This was a dual-tranche transaction, consisting of a EUR 9 billion five-year bond reaching maturity on 6 July 2026 and a EUR 6 billion 30-year bond reaching maturity on 6 July 2051. Both tranches had attracted very strong interest, which demonstrated the high confidence among investors in Europe and around the world. He welcomed the fact that the funds raised would help build a greener, more digital and more resilient Europe.

The Commission took note of this information.

#### **12.4. POLITICAL AGREEMENT ON THE REFORM OF THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY (CAP)**

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr TIMMERMANS and Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI informed the College of the agreement reached on 28 June between the co-legislators on the reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP). The main features of the new CAP's 'green' architecture would see 25% of the budget ring-fenced for eco-schemes and the CAP's legal provisions aligned with the objectives of the European Green Deal and in particular the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy. They explained that environmental considerations would need to be taken into account when the Member States submitted their draft national strategic plans to the Commission, the deadline for which was 31 December 2021.

The new rules would also require farmers to ensure that at least 4% of their arable land was non-productive or left fallow, a figure which could be increased to 7%, with 3% of land earmarked for non-productive elements, if farmers wished to include catch crops and nitrogen-fixing crops.

Lastly, they welcomed the fact that the social aspects of the CAP were being strengthened given the working conditions experienced by certain agricultural workers.

Mr TIMMERMANS also noted that EU leaders had played a decisive role in resolving the last outstanding issues with regard to the CAP reform and encouraging a paradigm shift that would put European agriculture at the heart of the European Green Deal.

Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI highlighted the importance of moving away from the industrial mindset of the CAP and towards sustainable agriculture, with greater ambition with regard to protecting the climate, the environment and animal welfare.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission referred briefly to the importance of ceasing to treat environmental protection and agricultural production as separate issues, and of continuing the efforts already made to bring about true gender equality in this sector of the economy.

The PRESIDENT expressed her satisfaction at the outcome of the negotiations and congratulated Mr TIMMERMANS and Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI, as well as the Commission departments involved, for their commitment to this complex matter and their contribution to an historic agreement on the reform of a policy that would remain central to EU integration in the years ahead by providing vital support for the European Green Deal.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 10.51.