



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2022) 2422 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 20 July 2022

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2422nd meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Monday 13 June (morning)

and

Friday 17 June 2022 (morning)

PV(2022) 2422 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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The 2422nd meeting of the Commission was held in two parts:

- on Monday 13 June 2022, from 9.11 to 12.27;
- on Friday 17 June 2022, from 9.07 to 11.16.

First sitting: Monday 13 June 2022 (morning)

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

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	Item 1 (in part)
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Mr SCHMIT	Member	Item 1 (in part)
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

The following sat in by videoconference:

Mr GENTILONI	Member
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Absent:

Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President
Ms GABRIEL	Member
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member
Ms DALLI	Member
Mr LENARČIČ	Member
Ms SIMSON	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member

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

Mr AGOTHA	Expert in Mr TIMMERMANS's Office
Mr HAGER	Chef de cabinet to Mr DOMBROVSKIS
Ms ROUCH	Chef de cabinet to Ms GABRIEL
Mr GOLUBIEWSKI	Chef de cabinet to Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI
Mr VELLA	Chef de cabinet to Ms DALLI
Ms SIMKIĆ	Chef de Cabinet to Mr LENARČIČ
Mr GRASSI	Chef de cabinet to Ms SIMSON
Mr RIBOKAS	Member of Mr SINKEVIČIUS's staff

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
Mr FLOSDORFF	Executive Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office
Mr KRISTÓFFY	Chef de cabinet to Mr VÁRHELYI
Mr MUELLER	Spokesperson's Service
Mr BIONDI	Spokesperson's Service
Mr VALERO	Secretariat-General
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General

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

1. ORIENTATION DEBATE ON THE COMMISSION OPINIONS ON THE APPLICATIONS FOR ACCESSION BY GEORGIA, MOLDOVA AND UKRAINE

(SEC(2022) 253)

The Commission held an orientation debate, the aim of which was to guide the preparation of the Commission opinions on the applications for accession to the European Union by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, in line with what had been requested by the European Council at its informal summit in Versailles on 10 and 11 March.

The Commission took note of these contributions and of the background note distributed as SEC(2022) 253.

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The first sitting closed at 12.27.

Second sitting: Friday 17 June 2022 (morning)

The second sitting opened at 9.07 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	Items 2 to 13.2
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	Items 9 to 13
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Ms GABRIEL	Member	Items 2 to 13 (in part)
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	Items 2 to 13
Mr BRETON	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	Items 2 to 13
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	Items 9 to 13 (in part)
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	Items 2 to 13
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	Items 2 to 13

The following sat in by videoconference:

Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President
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Absent:

Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
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Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President
Mr HAHN	Member
Mr GENTILONI	Member
Ms FERREIRA	Member
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member
Ms DALLI	Member
Ms JOHANSSON	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member
Ms McGUINNESS	Member

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

Ms CANENBLEY	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms VESTAGER	Items 2 to 13
Ms SPANOU	Chef de cabinet to Mr SCHINAS	Items 9 to 13
Mr MÜLLER	Chef de cabinet to Mr HAHN	Items 2 to 13 (in part)
Ms KOLEVA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms GABRIEL	Item 13 (in part)
Mr BUTI	Chef de cabinet to Mr GENTILONI	Items 2 to 13 (in part)
Mr SOBRAL	Chef de cabinet to Ms FERREIRA	Items 2 to 10/12
Mr ROSSIDES	Chef de Cabinet to Ms KYRIAKIDES	Items 2 to 13
Mr KERR	A member of Ms DALLI's staff	
Mr LAHTI	Chef de cabinet to Ms URPILAINEN	Items 2 to 13
Mr POWER	Chef de cabinet to Ms McGUINNESS	Items 2 to 10/12

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	
Mr FLOSDORFF	Executive Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr ANDRESEN GUIMARAES	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 10/12
Ms CABRAL	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Item 9
Ms MISETIĆ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office	Item 9
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	Items 10/12 and 13
Ms BUKA	Secretariat-General	
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	

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

2. AGENDAS

(OJ(2022) 2422/FINAL; SEC(2022) 2422/FINAL)

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

3. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(RCC(2022) 2422)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Thursday 16 June 2022.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2022) 2418; PV(2022) 2419)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2418th and 2419th meetings of 18 and 25 May 2022, and held over approval of the minutes of its 2420th and 2421st meetings of 1 and 7 June 2022 for a later date.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION

(RCC(2022) 25)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2022) 25 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 8 June 2022.

6. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF EUROPEAN UNION LAW

STATE AID AND OTHER COMPETITION RULES

The decision on this item is recorded in the special minutes.

7. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

7.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2022) 232 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 6 and 12 June 2022.

7.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2022) 233 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 6 and 12 June 2022.

7.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2022) 234 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 6 and 12 June 2022 archived in Decide.

7.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2022) 235 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 13 and 17 June 2022.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2022) 236)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2022) 35)

**8.1. DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION –
APPOINTMENT OF A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT GRADE
AD15/16**
(PERS(2022) 40 TO /3)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Director-General for ‘Jobs, Skills and Social Policies’ in DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (PERS(2022) 40).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 13 December 2021 and 21 January 2022 (PERS(2022) 40/2 and /3).

The Commission then examined the applicants’ qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr SCHMIT, it then decided to appoint Mr Stefan OLSSON to the post.

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

**8.2. DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION –
APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15**
(PERS(2022) 36 TO /3)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘European Pillar of

Social Rights, Strategy' Directorate in DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (PERS(2022) 36).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 13 and 16 December 2021 (PERS(2022) 36/2 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 Mr SCHMIT, it then decided to appoint Mr Denis GENTON to the post.

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

**8.3. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – APPOINTMENT OF A PRINCIPAL ADVISER AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2022) 37 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Principal Adviser, 'Commission Representative to COREPER I', in the Secretariat-General (PERS(2022) 37).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 3 and 12 May 2022 (PERS(2022) 37/2 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, it then decided to appoint Mr Elies MESSAOUDI to the post.

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

8.4. SERVICE FOR FOREIGN POLICY INSTRUMENTS – TRANSFER OF AN AD15 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr BORRELL, the Commission decided to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Peter WAGNER, an AD15 official and currently Principal Adviser for Coordination of COVID-19 related issues in the Secretariat-General, to the post of Head of the Service for Foreign Policy Instruments.

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

**8.5. PUBLICATIONS OFFICE – AUTHORISATION FOR THE INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL (AT GRADE AD14/15) AND EXTERNAL (AT GRADE AD14) PUBLICATION OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR A DIRECTOR POST
(PERS(2022) 38)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to authorise the publication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2022) 38 for the post of Director of the ‘Production of Publications’ Directorate in the Publications Office of the European Union.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**8.6. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF SPECIAL ADVISERS
(PERS(2022) 39)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 6 of PERS(2022) 35 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided:

- to appoint Mr Lodewijk ASSCHER as Special Adviser to Mr SCHMIT and Mr Karmenu VELLA as Special Adviser to Mr SINKEVIČIUS, as set out in PERS(2022) 39;
- by way of derogation from point 6, second paragraph, of Commission Decision C(2007) 6655 on the rules on special advisers to the Commission, to authorise Mr HAHN, the Member of the Commission responsible, to amend the contracts of Mr ASSCHER and Mr VELLA in the event of urgent and duly justified 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 the contracts on behalf of the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

8.7. DG INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART

By way of administrative follow-up to the decision taken at its meeting on 7 June 2022, the Commission decided:

- to create a temporary post of Principal Adviser, which would be abolished upon departure of the jobholder;
- to transfer to this newly created post, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Sandra KRAMER, currently Director of the ‘Africa’ Directorate in DG International Partnerships.

These decisions would take effect on 1 September 2022.

8.8. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART

By way of administrative follow-up to the decision taken at its meeting on 7 June 2022, the Commission decided:

- to create a temporary post of Adviser *hors classe*, which would be abolished upon departure of the jobholder;
- to transfer to this newly created post, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Jean-Eric PAQUET, currently Director-General of DG Research and Innovation.

These decisions would take effect on 1 September 2022.

8.9. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2022) 246)

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

- to create a new Directorate, ‘Digital, EU4Health and Health Systems Modernisation’ (SANTE.C);
- to create a temporary post of Principal Adviser, ‘Principal Scientific Adviser’ (SANTE.PA01), which would be abolished upon departure of the jobholder;
- to transfer to this newly created post, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Andrzej RYS, currently Director of the ‘Health Systems, Medical Products and Innovation’ Directorate (SANTE.B);

- to transfer, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Nathalie CHAZE, currently Director of the ‘Food Sustainability, International Relations’ Directorate (SANTE.D), to the post of Director of the ‘Food Safety, Sustainability and Innovation’ Directorate (SANTE.E);
- to approve the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2022) 246.

After the restructuring, the total number of Directorates in DG Health and Food Safety would increase from 7 to 8 and the number of units would decrease from 37 to 36.

These decisions would take effect on 1 October 2022.

**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 – CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE – PUTTING VISION INTO CONCRETE ACTION
(COM(2022) 404 TO /3; RCC(2022) 140)**

The PRESIDENT praised the tireless work done by the Commission over the past year in connection with the Conference on the Future of Europe, despite the difficulties linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. She warmly thanked Ms ŠUICA for her unwavering commitment throughout the work. The Conference had delivered 49 proposals and over 320 concrete measures coming from European citizens, and the Commission was taking the first step in following them up that day. She welcomed the fact that many of the proposals concerned initiatives that the Commission had already put forward or intended to put forward.

She also highlighted some worthwhile new suggestions that had come out of the Conference. As regards the proposals that would potentially require the Treaties to

be revised, she considered that the Commission should be open to reforms that aimed to improve how the EU currently worked. However, before all else, it would be vital to assess the need for the intended measures, clarify their objectives and examine the possible means of achieving them. The PRESIDENT then handed over to the three Vice-Presidents who would be presenting that day's Communication.

Ms ŠUICA thanked the PRESIDENT and the Commissioners for their collaboration and encouragement throughout the sometimes difficult discussions she had had at the Conference with representatives of the other institutions and with stakeholders. The Conference, which began its deliberations in May 2021, also benefited from the strong support from the Portuguese, Slovenian and French presidencies of the Council.

The Conference's primary aim had been to get closer to European citizens and show them that they could help shape the EU's future. From the outset, the Conference had been open to participation by members of the public, civil society, the European institutions and other European bodies, national, regional and local authorities, and other stakeholders, all of whom contributed as equal partners. This had resulted in a number of specific recommendations, and the Communication was the first part of the Commission's response to these. The proposals were divided into four categories: (i) proposals that were already being implemented, (ii) proposals that the co-legislators were working on, (iii) proposals for which the Commission intended to put forward a specific initiative, and (iv) new areas of work that could be addressed in the future.

With regard to potentially amending the Treaties, Ms ŠUICA stressed the need to always put citizens at the heart of the process and noted that the Commission should play its role as an impartial mediator in the political discussions between the European Parliament and the Council.

She added that work relating to the Conference was far from complete. In the March 2021 joint declaration, the Commission, the European Parliament and the

Council had all committed to act on the proposals made, in line with their powers and in accordance with the Treaties. An initial feedback event would be organised in the coming autumn to show European citizens how their proposals would be followed up and take stock of the progress that had been made. She called for this event to be held in Brussels so that the people who had taken part in the Conference would have the chance to travel to the institutional heart of the EU.

Finally, she recalled that she had presented the Communication entitled ‘Shaping the Conference on the Future of Europe’ to the Commissioners on 22 January 2020 and expressed her pleasure that the proposals put forward in that Communication had been implemented in full. She hoped that the Commission would be able to live up to citizens’ expectations by turning their ideas into real EU policies.

Ms JOUROVÁ felt that the time given over to the Conference on the Future of Europe had been time well spent. The organisers had initially feared that key issues for the future of Europe would not be discussed in a sufficiently open manner, but in her view, that fear had not been realised. This also meant that European citizens currently had high expectations that serious action would be taken on the Conference’s recommendations. The Commission was starting this process with the Communication being presented that day.

She welcomed the fact that most of the recommendations put forward by European citizens confirmed the soundness of this Commission’s political priorities. She highlighted that it would be politically advisable for the Commission to act on the recommendations and take into account the new ideas raised at the Conference.

She also referred to the issue of amending the Treaties, an idea she felt enjoyed greater support among the institutions’ representatives than among European citizens. As far as revising the Treaties was concerned, the only area that citizens considered a priority was a switch from unanimous voting to qualified majority voting when the Council made decisions in certain policy areas.

In short, Ms JOUROVÁ believed that the conclusions of the Conference on the

Future of Europe constituted valuable input, to which the Commission was now giving an initial response. She hoped that this input would be put to full use in connection with the next State of the Union address and the Commission's work programme for 2023.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ acknowledged that the start of the Conference's work had been difficult, but European citizens – and especially young people – had managed to provide very clear insights into the difficulties they faced in their daily lives and had voiced great hopes for the future. This had made it possible to engage in constructive dialogue and develop a common approach to the issues under discussion.

In that connection, he thanked all the Commissioners for their support, and particularly Ms KYRIAKIDES for her active involvement in the discussions about health.

He also highlighted the key role that the multilingual digital platform had played in providing input for the debates at the Conference: the platform had had over five million visitors, who had submitted a great many contributions. He was glad that the multilingual platform had been made operational and suggested that it be used in future to supplement the mechanisms used to consult European citizens and support the Commission's work on better regulation. This new method of consultation could change the way in which European citizens took part in the work of the EU institutions.

Finally, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stressed the need for the Commission to engage in a continuous process of following up on the recommendations made by European citizens, on the basis of the Communication being presented that day. The next stages in this process would be the feedback event mentioned earlier, the State of the Union address and the Commission's work programme for 2023.

A brief discussion followed, during which the Commission praised the vital work done by the Conference and the valuable contributions and innovative proposals put

forward by participants, who had called on the institutions to work towards bolstering the EU's strategic autonomy.

The PRESIDENT concluded by noting that the Communication being presented that day was not the end, but rather the beginning of a process of following up on the recommendations made by the Conference – a task that European citizens had clearly entrusted to the Commission and the other European institutions at the closing ceremony held in Strasbourg on 9 May 2022.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2022) 404/3 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. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL – COMMISSION OPINION ON GEORGIA'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(COM(2022) 405 AND /2; RCC(2022) 143)**
- 11. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL – COMMISSION OPINION ON MOLDOVA'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(COM(2022) 406 AND /2; RCC(2022) 143)**
- 12. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL – COMMISSION OPINION ON UKRAINE'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
(COM(2022) 407 AND /2; RCC(2022) 143)**

The PRESIDENT thanked all the Commission members for the excellent orientation debate held on this topic on Monday 13 June and praised the quality of the opinions presented to the College that day.

She stressed that these opinions constituted an in-depth analysis of the situation on the ground in the three countries in question, while noting that they had necessarily been influenced by the wider geopolitical context.

All three countries should be granted a European perspective, on the understanding that reforms of varying degrees still needed to be implemented in each. Although it was proposed that day to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova, on the understanding that reforms still had to be carried out in those countries, Georgia needed to meet a series of conditions before it could be granted candidate status.

The PRESIDENT explained that, beyond the emotional approach brought about by the war, Ukraine had grown ever closer to Europe over the last eight years, a development reflected in the reforms it had undertaken. However, these reforms now needed to be implemented in concrete terms, on the ground.

Mr VÁRHELYI pointed out that the enlargement process was governed by clearly defined rules and that the Commission had followed the same methodology in preparing the three opinions presented to the College for approval that day as it had for the opinions delivered in the past.

The Commission had assessed the accession applications from Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia on the basis of the candidates' ability to meet the criteria set by the European Council in Copenhagen in 1993 and in Madrid in 1995. Consequently, the opinions revolved around three major subject areas corresponding to the accession criteria: the political criteria, the economic criteria and the ability to take on the obligations of membership.

At this point, the focus was mainly on the political criteria, which would determine the next steps of the process in concrete terms.

An assessment of all relevant political criteria revealed that much remained to be done in all three countries.

The process focused on the merits of each country, with strict conditions to be met for it to be successful, and contained no shortcuts, its speed being dependent on the efforts made by the candidate countries themselves.

Mr VÁRHELYI also explained that, while there were fewer recommendations relating to the economic criteria, the consequences of the war in Ukraine meant that the foundations of the economies of Ukraine and Moldova were under serious threat.

The assessment of the EU acquis chapters focused on six main thematic areas, based on the revised enlargement methodology defined during the Commission's previous term of office. In this context, given the lack of time to analyse all documents received from the candidate countries, the assessment was mainly based on the relevant association and free trade agreements.

A more in-depth analytical report covering each of the thirty-three action areas of the EU acquis would be prepared at a later stage, based on the results of the June European Council.

In conclusion, Mr VÁRHELYI emphasised that the opinions prepared recommended a European perspective and candidate status for all three countries, with a distinction made between the means used to achieve it. Where Georgia was concerned, the idea was for the country to first implement pending reforms, especially with regard to the judicial system. He also stressed the need for the EU to remain vigilant on the geopolitical implications of the decisions taken and on the importance of providing each of the three countries with a credible option, which the European Council would have to approve unanimously.

Mr BORRELL noted that it was a crucial moment for the EU, for the three partner countries (Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia) and for peace and democracy in Europe,

against a backdrop of war on the continent.

Russia's military aggression in Ukraine could not be allowed to succeed and the EU needed to send a positive message to all three countries, emphasising that they all belonged to the European family and that each of them should have an accession perspective.

A credible enlargement policy was a geostrategic investment in peace, stability, security and economic growth in the whole of Europe. It was therefore important that the EU's decisions be correctly understood in the countries in question, which would require constant dialogue with them over the coming period.

In line with the established merit-based approach, the speed of the process lay in the hands of each of these three countries. In this sense the signal sent was clear, with a distinction drawn between the conditions applying to Ukraine and Moldova after being granted candidate status and those applying to Georgia before obtaining it.

Georgia should nevertheless receive a strong, positive signal on its European perspective. While the current government was not fully living up to expectations, for example in terms of rule of law, this should not detract from the many years of positive achievements by successive Georgian governments. Moreover, 83% of the Georgian people supported EU membership and Georgia had also suffered at the hands of Russian military aggression.

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

- the historic importance of the decisions taken, which represented a symbolic step in the EU's support for Ukraine in its fight against the Russian invader, giving it hope and prospects for the future, but also a strong geopolitical signal for all three countries as regards their membership of a free, democratic Europe, outside Russia's sphere of influence;

- the alignment of the methodology with that used for the annual reports on the rule of law, in order to deliver solid and coherent opinions that constituted a solid working basis for future discussions at the European Council;
- a reminder that the accession process was long and difficult and would only lead to a positive outcome for the three countries in question if their reforms were decided upon and, above all, implemented appropriately;
- the importance of the Venice Commission's opinion on the reforms undertaken in the three countries;
- clarifications as to the granting of candidate status and the conditions to be met ex-post for Ukraine and Moldova and ex-ante for Georgia;
- the reiterated desire that the conditions laid down for all three countries should be clear, realistic and measurable, since the next stages of the accession process would be determined by the extent to which they were complied with;
- the importance of appropriate communication by the Commission addressed not only at the countries in question but also at the citizens of Member States, some of whom were sceptical of the benefits of future enlargements for the EU;
- a reminder that it was important for the EU to lend close support for Ukraine's shift from a war economy to one of rebuilding;
- the value of giving as much assistance as possible to Georgia, which enjoyed good economic results, to help it move forward along its European path.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr VÁRHELYI and his services for the excellent work accomplished in the preparation of the opinions for the three countries, which gave them a European perspective and represented a historic moment in the development of the EU.

Following this presentation, the Commission approved the reports set out in COM(2022) 405/2, COM(2022) 406/2 and COM(2022) 407/2, for transmission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council, and, for information, to the national parliaments.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

13.1. SECURITY OF ENERGY SUPPLIES IN EUROPE

Ms SIMSON reported on her visit to Cairo on 15 June on the occasion of the PRESIDENT's meeting with the Egyptian President, Mr EL-SISSI, which had concluded with the publication of a joint statement on climate, energy and the green transition.

In view of the new geopolitical reality and the situation on the energy market following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and in accordance with the REPowerEU plan, the EU and Egypt had decided to step up their energy partnership. In this context, discussions had revealed that the security of gas supplies was a shared concern, and had enabled the conclusion of a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding between the EU, Egypt and Israel for the export of natural gas to Europe.

The three parties would work together to ensure stable supplies of natural gas in a way that was compatible with the long-term decarbonisation objectives and based on market-oriented pricing. Natural gas from Israel, Egypt and other sources in the eastern Mediterranean region would be channelled to Europe through Egypt's liquefied natural gas (LNG) export infrastructure.

This initiative fell directly within the March European Council's mandate for the Commission and the Member States to set up an EU energy platform for the voluntary joint purchase of gas, LNG and hydrogen.

Ms SIMSON also reminded the meeting that exports of Russian gas to Europe, in particular Germany, had been in continuous decline since the beginning of the Western sanctions against Moscow. In particular Gazprom, which on 15 June had reduced its deliveries of gas to the Italian group ENI by 15%, had on 16 June delivered only 65% of the quantities ordered, citing technical problems. Having cut off its supply of gas to Poland and Bulgaria, the Russian company was planning to reduce its supply to Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic in the near future.

These latest developments made it even more necessary to set up a European energy platform and to increase on one side the cooperation with the EU's international partners and on the other side the work of the task force established together with the United States to deal with energy security matters. In this context, the Commission was coordinating the creation of regional groups of Member States as part of an action plan aimed at strengthening European gas networks. Lastly, Ms SIMSON pointed out that underground gas storage was now above the level reached at the same time the previous year.

During the short discussion that followed, the Commission primarily raised the importance of continuing the action taken to secure the EU's energy supply and promote the transition to renewable energy sources.

The Commission took note of this information.

13.2. OUTCOME OF THE 12TH MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION (GENEVA, 12 TO 16 JUNE 2022)

Mr DOMBROVSKIS briefly presented the main outcomes of the 12th Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO), which finished during the night of 16 to 17 June in Geneva, i.e. a day later than planned in order to enable certain agreements to be finalised. He mentioned in particular the positive results achieved in the context of the fight against the

pandemic, especially the declarations on export prohibitions or restrictions and on derogations from the Agreement on Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights. He also mentioned the declaration on food security, which stressed the importance of avoiding unnecessary restrictions on food exports, and the need of improving transparency on restrictions when these had to be imposed.

He welcomed the agreement reached in the field of fisheries, which contained a firm commitment to stop subsidies to vessels engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. Negotiations were continuing with a view to reaching an agreement at the next ministerial conference on subsidies in relation to overfishing and overcapacity. Finally, the E-Commerce Moratorium had been extended until the next ministerial conference, and it had been agreed that discussions would begin on the reform of the WTO and in particular its dispute settlement system. He concluded by emphasising that the EU had shown itself to be very active and involved on the various matters concerned.

In the short debate that followed, Mr DOMBROVSKIS was praised for the outcomes achieved, in particular the relevance of the declaration on food security in the context of the current challenges.

The Commission took note of this information.

13.3. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Mr BORRELL reported on his speech on cooperation between the EU and the United Nations in the field of peace and security, delivered on 16 June at the UN Security Council chaired by Ms Olta XHAÇKA, the Albanian Minister for Foreign Affairs. He had been able to reaffirm the EU's commitment to the UN and its multilateral programme of action, particularly with regard to peace and international security.

This year's speech had been given against the background of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, a war which was putting millions of people around the world at risk of food insecurity, adding to the existing humanitarian difficulties.

Mr BORRELL said that he had also been able to talk to the ambassadors of African countries and that these discussions had shown how much these countries were influenced by Russian propaganda.

On that occasion he had been able to refute the allegations spread by Russian propaganda by explaining that it was not the sanctions that caused food insecurity, but rather the war conducted by Russia against Ukraine. He had also been able to offer EU support to mitigate the consequences of the increase in food prices.

He concluded his presentation by stressing the importance of continuing the efforts made by adopting a more assertive and proactive attitude in order systematically to counter Russian propaganda.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The Commission's other discussions on certain agenda items are recorded in the special minutes.

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The meeting closed at 11.16.