



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2022) 2428 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 12 October 2022

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2428th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 7 September 2022

(morning)

PV(2022) 2428 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Wednesday 7 September 2022 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.13 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 BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / 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 GENTILONI	Member
Mr BRETON	Member
Ms FERREIRA	Member
Mr REYNDEERS	Member
Ms DALLI	Member
Ms JOHANSSON	Member
Mr LENARČIČ	Member
Ms VÁLEAN	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member
Ms McGUINNESS	Member

Absent:

Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member
Ms SIMSON	Member

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

Mr GOLUBIEWSKI	Chef de cabinet to Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI
Ms OJALA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms KYRIAKIDES
Ms BARTELT	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms URPILAINEN
Mr GRASSI	Chef de cabinet to Ms SIMSON

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	Items 1 to 10
Ms CABRAL	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 10
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms BUKA	Secretariat-General	Items 1 to 10
Mr VALERO	Secretariat-General	Item 11
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.

The PRESIDENT started the meeting by remembering Mr Mauro PETRICCIONE, Director-General of the Directorate-General for Climate Action (DG CLIMA), who had passed away on 22 August. She asked those in attendance to hold a minute's silence. She highlighted Mr PETRICCIONE's great human qualities; he was a Director-General who was held in high esteem and highly respected by everyone.

She briefly described Mr PETRICCIONE's career; he was born in 1957 in Taranto, in Italy, and graduated from the University of Bari in 1982, and then from the University of London in 1986. He joined the European Commission in 1987, where he mainly worked in the field of trade policy, first in the Directorate-General for external relations before joining the Directorate-General for Trade, where he became Deputy Director-General in 2014 and supervised trade policy with third countries and the Member States, and also relations with the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Finally, she mentioned in particular his appointment in 2018 as Director-General of DG CLIMA, and his decisive role in both the EU's green recovery and the implementation of the European Green Deal.

On behalf of the Commission, the PRESIDENT presented her deepest condolences to his family and loved ones.

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1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2022) 2428/FINAL; SEC(2022) 2428/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(2022) 2428)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 5 September 2022.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2022) 2425; PV(2022) 2426; PV(2022) 2427, PV(2022) 2427, 2ND PART)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2425th, 2426th and 2427th meetings of 5, 13 and 20 July 2022.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2022) 157)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 2 September 2022 (RCC(2022) 157).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2018/842 on binding annual greenhouse gas emission reductions by Member States from 2021 to 2030 contributing to climate action to meet commitments under the Paris Agreement (Regulation) – POLFJÄRD report – 2021/0200 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 296/2.

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/631 as regards strengthening the CO₂ emission performance standards for new passenger cars and new light commercial vehicles in line with the Union’s increased climate ambition (Regulation) – HUITEMA report – 2021/0197 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 297/2.

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Amendment of Regulations (EU) 2018/841 as regards the scope, simplifying the compliance rules, setting out the targets of the Member States for 2030 and committing to the collective achievement of climate neutrality by 2035 in the land use, forestry and agriculture sector, and (EU) 2018/1999 as regards improvement in monitoring, reporting, tracking of progress and review (Regulation) – NIINISTÖ report – 2021/0201 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 298.

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Amendment of Decision (EU) 2015/1814 as regards the amount of allowances to be placed in the market stability reserve for the Union greenhouse gas emission trading scheme until 2030 (Decision) – ENGERER report – 2021/0202 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 299.

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Aviation**
 - **Amendment of Directive 2003/87/EC as regards aviation’s contribution**

to the Union's economy-wide emission reduction target and appropriately implementing a global market-based measure (Directive) – GLAVAK report – 2021/0207 (COD)

- **Amendment of Directive 2003/87/EC as regards the notification of offsetting in respect of a global market-based measure for aircraft operators based in the Union (Decision) – GLAVAK report – 2021/0204 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 300/2.

- **'Fit for 55 – ReFuelEU Aviation' – Ensuring a level playing field for sustainable air transport (Regulation) – GADE report – 2021/0205 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 302.

- **Consumer credits (Directive) – KONEČNÁ report – 2021/0171 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 305/2.

- **Markets in Crypto-assets (MiCA), and amendment of Directive (EU) 2019/1937 (Regulation) – BERGER report – 2020/0265 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 306.

- **Coordinated demand reduction measures for gas (Council Regulation) – 2022/0225 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 303/2.

The Commission approved the lines set out for the following points, for transmission to the European Parliament:

- **Replies by the European Commission to questions addressed to it by the European Parliament Committee of Inquiry to investigate the use of Pegasus and equivalent surveillance spyware (PEGA Committee)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 502/2.

- **Commission replies to the legislative resolutions (and list of non-legislative resolutions without formal reply) adopted by the European Parliament at its part-session of July 2022**

Line set out in SP(2022) 483/2.

- **Commission replies to the non-legislative resolutions adopted by the European Parliament at its May II, June I and July 2022 part-sessions**

Line set out in SP(2022) 484/2.

The Commission approved the line proposed for the following point, for transmission to the Committee of the Regions:

- **Follow-up to Committee of the Regions opinions – April 2022 plenary session**

Line set out in SR(2022) 13/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Renewable energy**
 - **Amendment of Directive (EU) 2018/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council, Regulation (EU) 2018/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Directive 98/70/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the promotion of energy from renewable sources, and repeal of Council Directive (EU) 2015/652 (Directive) – PIEPER report – 2021/0218 (COD)**
 - **Amendment of Directive (EU) 2018/2001 on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources, Directive 2010/31/EU on the energy performance of buildings and Directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency**

(Directive) – PIEPER report – 2022/0160 (COD)

Information set out in SP(2022) 486/2.

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Recast of the Energy Efficiency Directive (Directive) – FUGLSANG report – 2021/0203 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2022) 487.

- **Making available on the Union market as well as export from the Union of certain commodities and products associated with deforestation and forest degradation and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 995/2010 (Regulation) – HANSEN report – 2021/0366 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2022) 488/3.

- **Adequate minimum wages in the European Union (Directive) – RADTKE & JONGERIUS report – 2020/0310 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2022) 490, further to note SI(2022) 204 approved by the Commission on 14 June 2022 by written procedure.

- **Amendment to the European Parliament’s Rules of Procedure concerning Rule 216 on parliamentary committee meetings – 2022/2069 (REG)**

Information set out in SP(2022) 503.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2022) 31)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2022) 31 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 31 August 2022.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2022) 298 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 18 July and 4 September 2022.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2022) 299 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 18 July and 4 September 2022.

6.3. DELEGATION/SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2022) 300 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 18 July and 4 September 2022 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2022) 301 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 5 and 9 September 2022.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2022) 302)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2022) 53)

**7.1. JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT
GRADE AD14/15**
(PERS(2022) 54 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 ‘Sustainable Resources (Ispra)’ Directorate at the Joint Research Centre (PERS(2022) 54).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 29 April and 23 June 2022 (PERS(2022) 54/2 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 GABRIEL, it then decided to appoint Ms Alessandra ZAMPIERI to the post.

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

**7.2. JOINT RESEARCH CENTRE – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT
GRADE AD14/15**
(PERS(2022) 55 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 ‘Health, Consumers and Reference Materials (Geel)’ Directorate at the Joint Research Centre (PERS(2022) 55).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 29 April and 23 June 2022 (PERS(2022) 55/2 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 GABRIEL, it then decided to appoint Mr Guy VAN DEN EEDE to the post.

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

**7.3. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF A LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF HEAD OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO THE UNITED KINGDOM (AT GRADE AD15/16)
(PERS(2022) 56)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to approve the list of candidates for the post of Head of the European Union Delegation to the United Kingdom (at grade AD15/16) set out in PERS(2022) 56.

The competent authority of the European External Action Service (EEAS) would make the final appointment on the basis of this list.

This decision 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 ON THE EUROPEAN CARE STRATEGY
(COM(2022) 440 AND /2; SWD(2022) 440; RCC(2022) 167)**

**9. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HIGH-QUALITY LONG-TERM CARE
(COM(2022) 441 AND /2; SWD(2022) 441 AND /2; RCC(2022) 167)**

**10. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON THE REVISION OF THE BARCELONA TARGETS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE
(COM(2022) 442 TO /3; RCC(2022) 167)**

At the PRESIDENT's request, Ms ŠUICA presented to the College the Communication on the European care strategy, together with a Council Recommendation on access to affordable high-quality long-term care and a Recommendation on the revision of the Barcelona targets on early childhood education and care.

She began by pointing out that the proposed care package was a concrete response to demographic changes across the EU.

The strategy that had been devised was the result of a joint effort by the Members of the Commission and fulfilled the pledge made by the PRESIDENT in the previous year's State of the Union address.

Healthcare affected everyone throughout their lives and therefore had to be deeply anchored in the ongoing demographic transition.

In that regard, the proposed strategy not only considered the ageing population but also went beyond this by adopting an intergenerational approach, taking into account all demographic trends that had a strong impact on care services, such as changes in the composition of households and family members living further apart, which made some traditional care models difficult.

In general, the purpose of the proposed strategy was to set an agenda to genuinely improve the situation for both care providers and recipients, which was why it had been built on the basis of an integrated and person-centred approach.

The strategy also highlighted the challenges around care and proposed specific ideas and actions to address them, including expanding and improving care services to meet current and future needs.

Although care services had clear benefits for all ages, they were still out of reach for many people. That was why the Commission had based the package on the four principles that care had to be available, accessible, affordable and of appropriate quality.

Ms ŠUIČA pointed out, in particular, that many parents were unable to enrol their children in early childhood education systems because such services were simply not available or were too expensive.

In addition, almost half of people over 65 had unmet long-term care needs in terms of personal care or household activities.

Unfortunately, all those unmet needs had a disproportionate impact on women, since informal care responsibilities still fell predominantly on them, but also because they accounted for the vast majority of care workers, whose working conditions remained very difficult.

The two Council Recommendations included in the package were both based on the same principles of quality, affordability and accessibility.

With regard to the revision of the Barcelona targets, the Commission was not only setting more ambitious numerical objectives, but enhancing them with a quality dimension in order, in particular, to increase women's employment at a time when family responsibilities still left almost eight million of them out of the labour market.

The 2021 child rights strategy highlighted the benefits that participation in early childhood education and care could have for the healthy development of children, as well as helping to strengthen social inclusion for the children most in need, as recommended by the European Child Guarantee.

Ms ŠUIČA stressed in this context that access to affordable early childhood education and care was a fundamental right of children, as enshrined in principle 11 of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

This was the first time the Commission was putting forward a specific proposal on long-term care. It was timely in terms of learning lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and building strong long-term care systems fit for a demographically ageing Europe.

The proposal also came with a quality framework guided by EU-level principles, set out in the annex to the Recommendation, which should be applied in all long-term care settings, irrespective of the legal status of the providers.

The proposed strategy therefore explored all the different ways of improving working conditions in the care sector, while highlighting its potential for job creation in view of the ageing population.

The strategy also highlighted labour shortages in the care sector, which to some extent could also be addressed by legal migration. It identified ways of improving working conditions and wages, supported by strong social dialogue, education and training, to make care jobs more attractive and reward care work in line with its real societal value.

The strategy also addressed the whole dimension of informal care with the objective of ensuring that, through planned investment in the care sector, informal care could become a choice rather than the necessity it was today.

She highlighted the importance of public investment in the care sector, which in her view was clearly justified by the sector's many benefits for individuals, the economy and society as a whole.

Lastly, she noted that data collection and analysis tools had also improved greatly, which would make it possible to strengthen the evidence base for any measures implemented and monitor progress made as part of the European Semester exercise.

Ms ŠUIČA concluded her presentation by stating that, with the overarching strategy and the two Council Recommendations, the Commission's aim was to provide a concrete policy framework to drive forward the reform and investment needed at national, regional and local level.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS pointed out that, although the proposed package dealt mainly with matters of national competence, they had an important European dimension.

The aim of the proposed European care strategy was to set up a process to improve the quality, accessibility and affordability of care services, with a focus on early childhood care and long-term care, which were the subject of the two proposals for Council Recommendations.

Moreover, an ageing population and shrinking workforce meant that long-term care would pose a major challenge. In that context, the 2021 ageing report showed that projected public expenditure on long-term care as a percentage of GDP was expected to increase in the EU by more than 80% by 2070 compared with 2019.

The overall figures hid large differences among Member States, with several likely to see their expenditure increase by more than 100% or even 200%, and expenditure expected to increase much more with the transition to formal care and as costs and coverage converged.

In a coverage and cost convergence scenario, which would realise the ambitions of the package, public expenditure on long-term care would reach 5.1% of GDP compared with 1.7% in 2019.

It was therefore essential for Member States to draw up national plans, appoint coordinators and improve forecasting and provision of services, with a view to improving efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Lastly, he pointed out that the Member States also had to pursue policies that ensured sustainable funding of care services and safeguarded the overall sustainability of public finances, given the major risks referred to.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS concluded his presentation by noting that the figures showed that the challenge was considerable and made the package and the subsequent monitoring under the European Semester all the more important.

Ms JOUROVÁ stressed the importance of setting specific targets with regard to care while supporting their implementation by the Member States through the use of appropriate tools, at a time when almost eight million women were still excluded from the labour market. Comprehensive data collected in each Member State showed that the targets set in the past had still not been achieved.

On that topic, she noted that the Member States that were performing least well were often those that still had a high number of poorer households or marginalised minorities. Lastly, she felt that real improvement could only be brought about by guaranteeing a substantial amount of funding, though this ought to be viewed not as a cost but rather as an investment that produced direct benefits for the entire population by improving working conditions and access to care.

Mr SCHMIT considered that the proposed package of measures sent an important political message and delivered on the pledge made one year previously in the State of the Union address. He highlighted the potential for growth in the care sector and the diverse range of services on offer, which varied from one Member State to another. In particular, he stressed the importance of ensuring that these services were affordable so that they would be truly accessible for all, at a time when the number of people needing healthcare was continually increasing.

In a context where there was still significant fragmentation, the Recommendation on access to healthcare encouraged the Member States to strengthen cooperation and step up the sharing of best practices. Moreover, the human dimension was at the heart of the proposed strategy and greater analysis and monitoring of the development of the sector was needed. Although progress was still being made, the sector was struggling to recruit owing to the difficult working conditions, unattractive salaries and jobs that received little recognition. He also noted that

around 90% of the workforce in the sector was female and that the sector did not offer real career prospects.

He also referred to the contribution of mobile workers and migrants to the development of the care sector, in particular in terms of services for older people, a matter that was related to both the intra-European and non-EU aspects of care provision.

Lastly, Mr SCHMIT issued a call not to underestimate the importance of informal care, which was mostly provided by the millions of women who played a vital role in society. However, this informal care needed to be replaced by formal care, the quality of which had to be ensured by means of the criteria set out in the European Care Strategy.

Ms DALLI considered that the European Care Strategy was an investment in equality and social fairness in that it promoted gender equality and equal opportunities for children while upholding the rights of persons with disabilities and all people needing care, particularly the right to live independently.

The aim of revising the Barcelona targets on childcare was to give parents, and particularly women, the opportunity to have a good work-life balance by providing the requisite services.

In particular, she noted that the availability of childcare services was a key driver of women's participation in the labour market and that all too often women were still expected to provide more unpaid care than men.

Furthermore, while the Barcelona targets set by the European Council 20 years previously had largely been achieved, a number of gaps remained, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds whose parents often found the availability or cost of childcare to be a barrier.

That was why the EU needed to renew its commitment to increasing childcare services. The proposed Recommendation thus set out to revise the target figures

relating to the number of children in early childhood care and education, setting the following participation targets for 2030:

- at least 50% of children under the age of three, compared with the previous target of 33%;
- at least 96% of children aged between three and the age for beginning compulsory primary education, which was higher than the previous target of 90%.

Ms DALLI also pointed out that the Recommendation went beyond setting numerical targets. One significant new feature was that the Recommendation set out policy guidelines for the Member States, highlighting the key actions needed to achieve the objectives on increasing the use of childcare services.

First, Member States needed to promote the inclusion of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with disabilities or special needs, and close the gap with regard to the participation of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Second, the number of hours of childcare needed to be sufficient to allow parents to meaningfully engage in paid work.

Third, childcare services should be affordable, accessible and of high quality, and Member States were encouraged to introduce a legal entitlement to childcare.

Lastly, she stressed the need to improve working conditions and skills in this sector, where 90% of the workforce was female.

Ms DALLI concluded by explaining that in order to achieve these objectives, the Commission would need to continue to support the Member States in their individual efforts, not only by using existing EU funding but also through capacity-building in the care sector and by monitoring the ambitious targets set out in the strategy and the accompanying Recommendations.

The PRESIDENT concluded the presentation on the proposed package of measures by expressing her view that the issues addressed went to the very heart of what it meant to be European and were a shining example of EU solidarity towards the most vulnerable.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the Communication in COM(2022) 440/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and, for information, to the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2022) 440, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Recommendation in COM(2022) 441/2 for transmission to the Council and, for information, to the European Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and to the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2022) 441/2, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Recommendation in COM(2022) 442/3 for transmission to the Council, and, for information, to the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1. SITUATION IN THE ENERGY SECTOR

The PRESIDENT introduced the discussion on the situation in the energy sector, in preparation for the extraordinary meeting of the Energy Council on Friday 9 September and the State of the Union address on Wednesday 14 September.

She began by noting that the Czech Presidency of the Council had asked the Commission to provide guidance in order to find a solution to the very difficult energy situation that Europe was currently facing. The Commission's departments had been working intensively throughout the summer to draw up an informal document on this subject, and she expressed her appreciation of their efforts.

In the absence of Ms SIMSON, Mr TIMMERMANS outlined in more detail the measures currently being discussed to tackle the high energy prices affecting the European Union.

He noted that energy markets were under severe pressure and that all the Member States were looking to the EU to provide solutions to historically high energy prices. He also stressed that the current energy crisis was closely linked to the war in Ukraine and the weaponisation of fossil fuels by Russia, whose leaders were intentionally trying to disrupt the proper functioning of democracies and to damage the European Union.

European values and principles had to be defended, but it was equally important to stabilise prices for consumers.

In this context, Mr TIMMERMANS stressed that there were a number of options for tackling the energy crisis, which were currently under discussion.

First, it was necessary to coordinate the reduction of demand and to encourage Member States to actively contribute to this objective. He mentioned in particular the importance of reducing peaks in electricity demand.

Second, on the widely discussed topic of reforming the organisation of the electricity market, he felt that there would have to be a thorough impact assessment before the Commission could present a proposal early next year.

Third, the introduction of a windfall tax on companies producing renewable and nuclear energy ('inframarginal technologies') and fossil-fuel producers (by way of solidarity) could have a significant short-term impact on final consumers, whether households or businesses.

Fourth, he referred to possible measures to increase market liquidity, in particular to avoid a financial crisis similar to that triggered by the collapse of Lehman Brothers.

Finally, Mr TIMMERMANS said that a cap on Russian gas prices could be proposed as part of the package to be presented, alongside a cap on Russian oil prices, which was currently being discussed at G7 level.

The PRESIDENT stressed that Russia had been actively manipulating the energy market for months and the market was no longer functioning normally. Given this particular context, exacerbated by climate change and the extreme drought over the summer that had had an adverse effect on water levels and, consequently, on the generation of electricity from hydropower, nuclear and coal in several Member States, exceptional measures were needed.

She pointed out that the EU had already hit its 80% gas storage target before the deadline set and that it should further increase gas savings, while making better use of its joint gas purchasing platform.

There was also the challenge of setting a price cap for gas at a reasonable level that would make it possible to reconcile the need, on the one hand, to prevent imports from being diverted to other buyers because of higher profit margins elsewhere and, on the other, to make those prices reasonable for EU citizens and businesses.

Lastly, the PRESIDENT announced that weekly videoconferences would be held with all Commission Members to discuss the energy situation, following

the example of similar meetings held during the pandemic to discuss the epidemiological situation.

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

- a reminder of the action taken by the Commission since the beginning of the war in Ukraine to replace imports from Russia;
- the observation that the sanctions adopted by the European Union were effective and that European citizens and third countries should be more aware of this fact; the need also to clearly denounce third countries that helped and benefited from the circumvention of sanctions;
- Russia's instrumentalisation of energy and the need for the European Union to respond to this with unity and resilience;
- the case for using the exceptional profits of large companies to help combat the energy crisis, in compliance with competition rules and the internal market;
- questions that would have to be answered in the short and medium term regarding the amount of future collective investment needed in the energy sector;
- concerns about the many uncertainties looming over the economy in Europe, whether it be inflation, possible recession in some Member States, pressure on wages, shortages of certain goods or an increase in temporary unemployment;
- the need for an ambitious package of proposals in the energy sector, including various measures such as breaking the link between electricity and gas prices, capping gas prices, channelling excessive profits and prolonging the temporary State aid framework;

- in this context, the need for a discussion with producer countries, such as Norway and the United States, to make them aware of the seriousness of the situation in Europe and to encourage them to accept, in particular, the principle of a maximum price for gas and a reduction in the excessive profits of their large companies in the sector;
- a reminder that even if traditional monetary tools were employed, they would not defeat inflation, as energy accounted for around 40% of the inflation figure and so to control inflation it was necessary to tackle the current problems in the energy sector;
- on the question of overhauling the structure of the European energy market, the observation that this would be a long-term project requiring the involvement and support of the sectors concerned and all stakeholders;
- the importance of achieving less volatility and greater predictability for energy prices in the long term;
- questions about how to reduce energy demand and hence consumption, and the political and social consequences;
- questions about the impact of rising production costs in Europe on the competitiveness of its economy;
- acknowledgement that there was a certain degree of weariness and fatigue in European citizens' support for Ukraine;
- the possibility of drawing on the European instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE), which had proven its worth during the recent pandemic;
- the importance of unanimous agreement among the Member States on the solutions chosen and the need to ensure that there was no fragmentation in the EU market in the event of safeguards being provided by certain

Member States for their undertakings;

- a reminder of the necessity of continuing investment in renewable and environmentally friendly energies, which constituted a key factor in shortening the ongoing energy crisis and in maintaining climate neutrality as a goal;
- the fight against speculation and the windfall profits of market players remained a part of the solution and it was important to continue working on the issue;
- a reminder of the need to manage social and political expectations carefully, in particular to state clearly, through appropriate communication, what could and could not be done at EU level; the importance, in this respect, of combating Russian propaganda on a daily basis at both the EU and Member State levels;
- acknowledgement of the robustness of the EU's institutional architecture, which would enable all players to take on their role fully to the benefit of the EU's citizens and undertakings.

The PRESIDENT concluded by emphasising the importance of effective communication and noting that the measures to be put forward, however good they were, would not constitute a panacea that would bring about an automatic cut in energy prices. The context worldwide should not be overlooked and, without anticipating a return to business as usual, the correct balance would have to be struck between the different steps to be taken.

As far as capping gas prices was concerned, uncertainty remained as to the effect of setting prices at either too high or too low a level. EU undertakings were currently paying for future deliveries of gas (collateral guarantees) and this would have consequences on available cash and the risks to be guaranteed.

She took note of the interest of Members of the Commission in obtaining aggregate figures, particularly with respect to sanctions. She referred, on this point, to a very recent report from Yale University on the impact of EU sanctions on the Russian economy, which she suggested they should all read.

She ended the discussion on this point with a reminder that the first informal meeting by video conference on the energy situation would be held on Saturday 10 September.

The Commission took note of this information.

11.2. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The PRESIDENT asked Mr BORRELL to brief the College on the latest developments in external relations.

Mr BORRELL referred in particular to the talks held between Foreign Ministers and Defence Ministers at the end of August. On 30 and 31 August 2022, the Czech Presidency of the Council had organised an informal ‘Gymnich’ meeting of the EU’s Foreign Ministers in Prague.

In this respect, the Ministers had mainly discussed two matters, namely EU relations with Africa and Russian aggression against Ukraine. The main outcome of the meeting had been an agreement between Member States to suspend the agreement between the EU and Russia on the facilitation of the issuance of visas.

At the informal meeting of EU Defence Ministers, which had also taken place in Prague, on 29 and 30 August, agreement in principle had been reached on the creation of a military assistance mission in Ukraine, which should build on the existing bilateral activities and work, on a temporary basis, in the territory of one of the EU’s Member States.

He stressed that the Ministers had taken note with concern of the situation at

the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station in Ukraine and had emphasised that it was essential for the Russian occupying forces to allow the International Atomic Energy Authority's inspectors to access the facilities. On this point, he spoke of launching an initiative with the UN Security Council to demilitarise the nuclear plant.

The funding provided to Ukraine to date through the European Peace Facility totalled EUR 2.5 billion, which was putting some pressure on the instrument.

Continuing his overview, Mr BORRELL turned to the worsening situation in the Sahel, Somalia and Tigray.

He also noted that the new draft Constitution in Chile had been rejected by two thirds of the population and that it would be advisable for the EU to try to finalise a trade agreement with the country.

Mr BORRELL ended his presentation by noting that a ministerial meeting would be held in October with the partner countries of Latin America, which should bolster the EU's relations with the region, in which Russia and China exerted increasing influence.

Mr LENARČIČ then informed the Members of the Commission that Bosnia-Herzegovina had officially joined the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. The country had benefited from the EU Civil Protection Mechanism as a receiving country, but now, as a full member, it would also be able to dispatch assistance actively via the mechanism where it was needed.

The Commission took note of this information.

11.3. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'EVERY EUROPEAN HOUSE EQUIPPED WITH 1 KW PHOTOVOLTAIC AND 0.6 KW WIND TURBINES USING EU FUNDING THROUGH THE MUNICIPALITIES ALONE', PURSUANT

***TO REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
AND OF THE COUNCIL
(C(2022) 6108)***

***11.4. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR
REGISTRATION OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE
ENTITLED 'PROTECT THE EU'S RURAL HERITAGE, FOOD
SECURITY AND SUPPLY', PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU)
2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL
(C(2022) 6193)***

Ms JOUROVÁ presented the two Decisions submitted for approval by the College concerning the registration of two European citizens' initiatives entitled, in the authentic language (English), 'Every European house equipped with 1 kW photovoltaic and 0.6 kW wind turbines using EU funding through the municipalities alone' and 'Protect the EU's Rural Heritage, Food Security and Supply'.

The first initiative called for action to install photovoltaic panels and wind turbines across the EU in order to supply households (including those in the most isolated villages) with green energy and thereby reduce their carbon footprint.

The second initiative called on the European Union to renew its commitment to promoting regional heritage and sustainable rural growth, and improving living standards in rural areas in order to ensure the sustainability of European food producers and guarantee the supply of agricultural materials.

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

Noting that the two requests fell within the powers conferred on the Commission, she pointed out that if, within 12 months, the initiatives received the minimum support required, in other words at least one million signatures from citizens of at least one-quarter of the Member States, the Commission would then examine the substance of the proposals. The Commission would have a period of six months to submit, in each case, its reasoned decision whether or not to take any action.

Finally, Ms JOUROVÁ pointed out that, during the summer, a citizens' initiative for a tobacco-free environment had been registered by written procedure.

Following this presentation, the Commission confirmed that the two citizens' initiatives, 'Every European house equipped with 1 kW photovoltaic and 0.6 kW wind turbines using EU funding through the municipalities alone' and 'Protect the EU's Rural Heritage, Food Security and Supply', fulfilled the necessary conditions for registration. It therefore decided, in accordance with C(2022) 6108 and C(2022) 6193, to inform the two groups of organisers, and authorised Ms JOUROVÁ to sign the replies on behalf of the College, in the authentic language (English), to send them to the groups of organisers of the two initiatives, and to publish them, for information, in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The Commission also agreed to transmit its decisions, for information, to the European Parliament, the European Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 11.26.