



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2022) 2434 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 16 November 2022

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2434th meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 18 October 2022

(afternoon)

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Single sitting: Tuesday 18 October 2022 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.05 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	Items 1 to 12
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	Items 1 to 14 (in part)
Mr HAHN	Member	Items 13 and 14
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	Items 1 to 10/12 (in part)
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	Items 1 to 13
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

Absent:

Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President
Ms GABRIEL	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member

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

Mr MES	A member of Mr TIMMERMANS's staff	
Ms ASTERIADI	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Items 13 and 14
Mr HULICIUS	A member of Ms JOUROVÁ's staff	
Ms SRŠEN	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms ŠUICA	
Mr NOACK	A member of Mr HAHN's staff	Items 1 to 12
Mr LOBRY-DEBLYCK	Policy Assistant in Ms GABRIEL's office	
Mr SAVIGNAT	A member of Ms URPILAINEN's staff	
Mr ŠATŪNAS	Chef de cabinet to Mr SINKEVIČIUS	

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 VANDENBERGHE	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's office
Ms HILI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's office

(18 October 2022)

Mr VAN KEMSEKE

A member of the PRESIDENT's staff

Mr VALERO

Secretariat-General

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

1. AGENDAS (OJ(2022) 2434/FINAL; SEC(2022) 2434/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) 2434)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Friday 14 and Monday 17 October 2022.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2431st, 2432nd and 2433rd meetings of 28 September and 4 and 12 October 2022 for a later date.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(RCC(2022) 189)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Thursday 13 October 2022 (RCC(2022) 189).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **European green bonds (Regulation) – TANG report – 2021/0191 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2022) 354/4.

- **Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States
(Council Decision) – HOMS GINEL report – 2022/0165 (NLE)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 573/2.

- **Situation of the internal market of Union postal services – Council Decision (EU) 2022/1327 of 26 July 2022 requesting the Commission to submit a study on the situation of the internal market of Union postal services, in particular regarding the application of Directive 97/67/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, and a proposal, if appropriate, in view of the outcomes of the study**

Line set out in SI(2022) 355.

- **EU budget – Discharge 2020 – European Border and Coast Guard Agency – ZDECHOVSKÝ report – 2021/2146 (DEC)**

Line set out in SP(2022) 586.

- **Update of the Protocol on Cooperation between the European Commission and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)**

Line set out in SC(2022) 29.

- **Non-papers regarding changes to the cohesion policy framework in the context of the energy crisis within the framework of the REPowerEU legislative negotiations**

Line set out in SPI(2022) 59.

The Commission approved the line proposed for the following point, for transmission to the European Economic and Social Committee:

- **Follow-up to opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee – Plenary session of May 2022**

Line set out in SC(2022) 30/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Energy performance of buildings (recast) (Directive) – CUFFE report – 2021/0426 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2022) 347.

- **Reform of the electoral law of the European Union – Election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repeal of Council Decision (76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom) and Act concerning the election of the members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that decision (Council Regulation) – 2022/0902 (APP)**

Information set out in SI(2022) 357/2.

- **Question Time (Commission) - Protecting critical infrastructure in the EU against attacks and countering hybrid attacks**

Information set out in SP(2022) 594.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2022) 37)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2022) 37 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 12 October 2022.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2022) 357 ET SEQ.)

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The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 10 and 16 October 2022.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2022) 358 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 10 and 16 October 2022.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2022) 359 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 10 and 16 October 2022 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2022) 360 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 17 and 21 October 2022.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2022) 361)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2022) 70)

DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY / SECRETARIAT-GENERAL –
EXTENSION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN AND
MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN FISCAL BOARD
(PERS(2022) 71)

The Commission took note of the information set out in point 1 of PERS(2021) 70 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr DOMBROVSKIS, decided:

- to extend the term of office of Mr Niels THYGESEN as Chairman of the European Fiscal Board and of Mr Roel BEETSMA, Mr Massimo BORDIGNON and Mr Mateusz SZCZUREK as Members of the Board for a period of 1 year from 20 October 2022, during which period they would have the status of special advisers to Mr DOMBROVSKIS, the Executive Vice-President for an Economy that Works for People;
- to authorise Mr HAHN, Member of the Commission responsible for Human Resources, to amend the contracts of these special advisers in the event of urgent and duly justified needs, subject to the availability of sufficient budgetary resources;
- 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;
- to extend in the same way the term of office of the Head of Secretariat for a period of 1 year from 20 October 2022.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE FOR VEGAN MEAL' PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF

THE COUNCIL**(C(2022) 7418)**

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ presented the proposal for a Decision being tabled for approval by the College concerning the registration of a European citizens' initiative entitled, in the authentic language (English), 'European citizens' initiative for vegan meal'.

According to the organisers, the aim of the initiative was to require private and public places selling food and drink in Europe to explicitly offer a vegan alternative.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ stressed that the College's task that day was to decide only on the registration of the proposal and not at this stage to analyse its substance or political advisability.

Noting that the request fell within the powers conferred on the Commission, he pointed out that if, within 12 months, the initiative received the minimum support required, in other words at least one million signatures from citizens from at least one quarter of the Member States, the Commission would then examine the substance of the proposal. The Commission would have a period of 6 months to submit its reasoned decision whether or not to take any action.

Following this presentation, the Commission confirmed that the citizens' initiative 'European citizens' initiative for vegan meal' met the requisite conditions for registration. It therefore decided, in accordance with C(2022) 7418, to inform the group of organisers and authorised Ms JOUROVÁ to sign the reply on behalf of the College, in the authentic language (English), to send it to the group of organisers of the initiative, and to publish it, for information, in the Official Journal of the European Union.

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

**9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS: COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2023 – A UNION STANDING FIRM AND UNITED
(COM(2022) 548 AND /2; RCC(2022) 194)**

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ began by noting that this was the last full work programme of this Commission's term of office. He stressed that the consecutive crises of recent years had made the exercise less predictable than in the past. In this difficult geopolitical context, it was essential to focus on the priorities set out in the PRESIDENT's 2022 State of the Union address and her letter of intent, namely the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the energy crisis, the economic outlook of the Union, the defence of its democratic values, and what remained of the commitments in the Political Guidelines for 2019-2024.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ explained that the work programme was organised around the six headline ambitions for Europe set out in the PRESIDENT's Political Guidelines. He added that the programme contained 43 new strategic initiatives, listed in Annex I, and that it provided a selective overview of the priority proposals on which interinstitutional negotiations could reasonably be concluded before the 2024 European Parliament elections. The Commission would also, if necessary, present other initiatives during the year, depending on the political agenda.

He pointed out that almost four out of five new initiatives directly or indirectly followed up on the proposals made by the Conference on the Future of Europe and that some initiatives stemmed from the European Parliament's Article 225 resolutions. In some key areas, a new generation of citizens' panels would be set up to contribute to the Commission's policy-making.

Referring to the busy programme of the College until the end of 2022, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ pointed out that 11 files in this year's work programme had already

been carried over to next year. He therefore emphasised the ‘one in, one out’ approach and stressed in this regard the importance of continuing to identify opportunities for simplification and burden reduction, beyond the REFIT initiatives listed in Annex II to the work programme.

He then explained that Annex III listed the proposals currently being negotiated by the co-legislators. He believed that special attention would have to be paid to these proposals and noted that the list would serve as a basis for discussions with the European Parliament and the Council on the joint declaration on legislative priorities for 2023. Finally, Annex IV contained one file for withdrawal and Annex V one file for repeal.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2022) 548/2 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.

10. 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 – ENERGY EMERGENCY – PREPARING, PURCHASING AND PROTECTING THE EU TOGETHER (COM(2022) 553 TO /4; RCC(2022) 196)

11. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL REGULATION ENHANCING SOLIDARITY THROUGH BETTER COORDINATION OF GAS PURCHASES, EXCHANGES OF GAS ACROSS BORDERS AND RELIABLE PRICE BENCHMARKS (COM(2022) 549 TO /3; RCC(2022) 196)

12. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – DIGITALISING THE ENERGY SYSTEM - EU ACTION PLAN (COM(2022) 552 AND /2; SWD(2022) 341; RCC(2022) 196)

The PRESIDENT presented the energy package, stressing the scale of the proposed measures and the fact that the main content had already been unveiled during the informal videoconference of the College held the previous weekend.

Over the past 8 months, since the beginning of the war in Ukraine, there had been a trend towards a tightening of the market and rising energy prices, owing in particular to Russia's continued attempts to put pressure on the European Union by using energy as a weapon. She stressed the enormous efforts made by the EU to meet this challenge, in particular the gas storage capacity filled to unprecedented levels (92%), the diversification of gas deliveries, the record deployment of renewable energy production, the drop in overall gas consumption (-15%) and caps imposed voluntarily by Member States on the windfall profits of inframarginal producers in order to support vulnerable consumers.

The package presented that day was a new stage in this process. The aim was to cut consumption further and share energy production, reduce speculation and manipulation of prices linked to the Title Transfer Facility (TTF) and, finally, ensure a level playing field on the single market for the investments needed to diversify the energy mix, while at the same time maintaining fair competition and the competitiveness of European small and medium-sized enterprises. All of that went hand in hand with a reinforcement of the REPowerEU plan.

Ms SIMSON then briefly presented the main points of the proposed package of measures, the key element of which was the work on benchmarks. Most gas supplies arriving in Europe were based on spot market prices, the most commonly used reference index being the TTF which, after reaching a peak of 360 in August,

had now fallen back to 150. In addition, significant volumes of long-term liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies were also indexed to the TTF.

Ms SIMSON said that the European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER) had been asked to establish a more transparent LNG benchmark based on LNG transactions. The Commission proposed handing over to ACER the necessary powers and information to produce such an index, which should be completed by 31 March next year, before the start of the next gas storage filling season. The Commission was also proposing a basis for creating a dynamic mechanism to correct market prices, however the specific features of this mechanism needed further finetuning.

The second element of the package was the proposal on a voluntary joint gas purchasing plan. It was the companies, not the Commission, that would continue to buy gas, but joint purchasing would make it possible to achieve critical mass for the EU as a whole and a larger number of suppliers. The Commission would therefore ask Member States to ensure that companies took part in the group purchasing scheme for up to at least 15% of their gas storage obligation.

This would make the EU better prepared for the next storage filling season, when it was expected that Russian gas deliveries would fall short and that Chinese demand for energy would be fully restored. Rather than competing against each other, this approach would encourage undertakings from different Member States to work together to ensure security of supply. This was a challenge for the EU legislative framework as this type of consortia must comply with the competition rules.

The third element of the package of proposed measures was the need to ensure that Member States were not left to their own if supplies were disrupted, which was why the Commission was also proposing to strengthen solidarity mechanisms.

The last element of the package was the action plan to digitalise the energy system. The massive deployment of renewable energy could take place only if the energy network was technologically ready and much more interactive than it was at the

moment. The proposed action plan would therefore speed up progress in both the green transition and the digital transition of the energy sector. Five policy areas were proposed, including the important component of reducing energy consumption, in particular consumption related to crypto-assets.

Ms McGUINNESS presented the elements of the package linking energy markets and financial markets, noting that they were time-limited and targeted as the aim was not to let the energy crisis spill over into a financial crisis.

In particular, two delegated acts aimed to ease the liquidity stress faced by energy companies. The first delegated act concerned an expansion of the list of what these companies could use as collateral on energy derivatives markets. The second delegated act increased from EUR 3 billion to EUR 4 billion the threshold below which energy companies using over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives would not have to provide margins for their bilateral trades.

These measures were proposed in agreement with the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) in order to avoid disrupting market stability. With a view to addressing the problem of soaring prices on the energy derivatives market, the Commission also recommended setting up a mechanism to limit intra-day spikes in gas and electricity derivatives prices. The design, characteristics and uniform conditions for implementing this instrument to deal with price volatility would be defined by the Commission in close cooperation with ESMA.

Referring to the development of the alternative index based on LNG transactions, Ms McGUINNESS stressed the need to ensure that it was also used on the energy derivatives markets. She went on to welcome the joint work of ACER and ESMA in ensuring transparency on these markets and addressing citizens' concerns about speculation in the energy system.

In conclusion, she underlined her conviction that all these measures would make a real difference for energy operators and that, in the short and medium term, they

would help alleviate the pressure of rising energy prices which was seriously affecting consumers and businesses at the moment.

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

- its full support for the proposed measures that helped prepare the EU to cope with developments in the energy market in the medium and long term;
- at the same time, the need to work on the immediate effectiveness of these measures, in particular with a view to ensuring greater predictability and to preserve the competitiveness and know-how of European undertakings vis-à-vis those in other parts of the world;
- the importance, therefore, of continuing to push Member States towards a decoupling of gas and electricity prices through a balanced and equitable solution for the European Union as a whole, enabling all the industrial ecosystems to be preserved;
- the significant number of jobs dependent both directly and indirectly on energy-intensive industries and the prospect of a return to short-time working in these sectors owing to production halts and the reluctance of undertakings to take on staff;
- the inflationary consequences of declining industrial output and the risks of deindustrialisation and recession;
- the necessity of finding a temporary solution with respect to State aid in this exceptional situation, in order to support businesses and help them finance a more rapid green and digital transition;
- the contribution of the cohesion funds to the financing of structural changes and the reduction of energy bills, and the possibility provided by the Flexible Assistance to Territories (FAST-CARE) facility to Member States to use up to

10% of the remaining funds for the period 2013-2020 to support SMEs and employees;

- the notion of using a part of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) funds for new financial instruments that could take the form of equity or quasi-equity, in addition to long-term loans for undertakings;
- the need to develop prudent solutions that also took into account cross-border energy flows, including to countries neighbouring the EU;
- the absolute necessity of making the joint purchasing platform work, preferably through a consortium of undertakings, and the availability of the Commission's departments to work with undertakings in this regard within the framework of competition law;
- satisfaction with the action plan for digitalising energy systems, in particular with respect to the parts concerning crypto-assets and the security of the energy network;
- reference to the different consumer protection systems existing in the Member States and the possibility of introducing minimum rules for the EU as a whole, for example, in order to prohibit the cutting off of consumers from the heating and electricity networks during the winter or to grant additional payment time for bills and loans related to energy bills;
- the idea of developing a digital application for all consumers in the EU, to provide them with more information on the prices charged by various suppliers, to give them access to solutions in the event of conflicts with their suppliers or to explain to them what kind of financial support they could receive;
- the existence of a multifaceted crisis, in which geopolitical and energy factors and inflation fed into each other, and one which affected some parts of the world, including Europe, more than others;

- the possibility, provided for in the package presented, of common funding for the REPowerEU plan, which also constituted a positive signal for the financial markets;
- in this context, the possibility that some countries, which were not currently interested in RRF loans, might be interested in the coming months depending on developments in interest rates;
- the need for the European Council and the Council to move towards a common solution based on the Commission's proposals that day, in order to address the root causes of the energy crisis and take urgent mitigating action by way of as many instruments as possible;
- at the same time, the necessity of investing more in gas and electricity interconnections, and in LNG production to ensure supply and avoid competition with Asia for the same supplies;
- in this context, mention of the external dimension of the package and the work involved in formulating a positive message of assistance to the EU's partners, in particular towards the Western Balkan countries.

In response to certain comments, the PRESIDENT said that the possibility of joint purchases expressly provided for the inclusion of the Western Balkans. She also recognised the merits of a decoupling of gas and electricity prices (the 'Iberian model'), but stressed the need to collect more data in order to be able to anticipate the potential effects at European level. In this respect, she pointed out the two main issues to be taken into consideration: on the one hand, how to ensure that all Member States shared the difference between the price of capped gas and the actual market price in a fair way and, on the other hand, how to avoid the energy subsidy being channelled outside the EU. With regard to price caps, she noted that, although there was increased support for this measure, there was still no consensus among the Member States.

As regards the issue of preserving the competitiveness of European businesses in the current situation, she stressed that the main instrument to be used at European level was the REPowerEU plan. She called on all Members of the Commission to work with the European Parliament and the Council to facilitate a swift agreement and make the instrument operational as soon as possible.

The PRESIDENT added that the main objective of this package of measures was to help the European Council formulate strategic guidelines and that the work could then be completed by the Council of Energy Ministers. In her view, all the Member States understood that no easy solution for the wholesale gas and electricity markets was available, which was why the Commission had brought together the leading national energy experts to discuss the technical details of each possible option.

As for the mechanism for correcting TTF indexed prices, she stressed that the index had been heavily manipulated by Russia and the aim of the package presented that day was to eliminate spikes due to such manipulation, while maintaining the flexibility of the index and linking contracts with other benchmarks. A new index tracking the LNG market needed to be developed and, by then, the EU would need a market correction mechanism.

The PRESIDENT wound up the debate by thanking all the Commissioners for their work and their active participation in the preparation of these important proposals.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the Communication in COM(2022) 553/4 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;
- adopted the proposal for a Council Regulation in COM(2022) 549/3 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;

- approved the communication in COM(2022) 552/2 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) 341, the contents of which were noted.

13. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON A COORDINATED APPROACH BY THE UNION TO STRENGTHEN THE RESILIENCE OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE (COM(2022) 551 TO /3; RCC(2022) 188)

Mr SCHINAS pointed out that the EU had already started work on issues relating to critical infrastructure before Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine. In summer 2022, the co-legislators had reached an agreement on two texts adopted by the Commission in 2020, the proposal for a Directive on the resilience of critical entities ('CER II') and the proposal on measures for a high common level of cyber security across the Union ('NIS II').

Now more than ever, it was essential to ensure the security of infrastructure at European level, and for the EU to respond fully to the existing threats. For this reason, the Commission was that day asking the Council and Parliament to implement the agreement as soon as possible, adding crisis coordination and extending protections to new infrastructure and sectors, with the further addition of stress tests for the entities managing the infrastructure.

The proposal also included the creation of a joint task force with NATO on cyber-security issues and the development of blueprints for the Member States, entities and structures implementing the new rules.

Mr SCHINAS concluded his presentation by pointing to the existing instruments that helped strengthen early-warning and threat-response capabilities, in particular the European Civil Protection Mechanism (ECPM) and the Copernicus and Galileo satellite programmes.

Ms JOHANSSON emphasised the fact that European critical infrastructures were more interconnected and interdependent than before, making them stronger and more efficient but also more vulnerable to threats.

Following the political agreement reached in the Council on the two proposals adopted by the Commission in 2020, it was now important to speed up the implementation of these Directives, as they would only enter into force at the beginning of 2023, and the Member States would then have 21 months to transpose them.

After Russia's latest attacks on Ukraine and the recent sabotaging of the Nord Stream gas pipeline and the German rail network, it had become clear that it was necessary not only to accelerate the application of the new rules but also to intensify efforts through additional non-legislative measures and strengthened cooperation.

Ms JOHANSSON noted in this context that stress tests were already being prepared and that the EU was helping, supporting and coordinating the action of the Member States and the entities concerned by means of guidelines and the sharing of best practices.

She reiterated that the primary objective of the Recommendation proposed that day was to increase the resilience of critical infrastructure in Europe, with recommendations in three priority areas: preparedness, response and international cooperation. The Recommendation covered both physical and digital infrastructure, and encompassed all sectors from the new Directives (energy, transport, digital infrastructure, banking, financial market infrastructure, health, drinking water, wastewater, public administration, space and food), with priority given to energy,

transport, digital infrastructure and space.

Ms JOHANSSON concluded her presentation by highlighting the value of rapidly increasing protection of the EU's critical infrastructure in terms of (i) preparedness, for example by means of stress tests and information exchange, (ii) response, in particular through the Council's crisis mechanism (IPCR) and the European Civil Protection Mechanism (ECPM), and (iii) international cooperation with key EU partners and with NATO.

Mr BRETON noted that the war in Ukraine had exacerbated the need to protect infrastructure, as demonstrated by the cyberattack on Viasat, the American satellite telecommunications company, and the recent attacks on the Nord Stream 1 and Nord Stream 2 pipelines. The EU had to be extremely vigilant, especially with regard to its satellite network and in particular Galileo, but also with reference to the various underwater cables.

The recent Russian attacks in Ukraine had destroyed 30% of its electricity infrastructure, and Russia was certainly seeking to destroy the majority of this infrastructure in the end, risking substantial difficulties for the coming winter and creating a need to help Ukraine with the supply of different types of energy.

With regard specifically to European critical infrastructure, Mr BRETON stressed that the purpose of the proposed Recommendation was (i) to launch a risk assessment on the underwater cables and energy, digital, transport and space infrastructure, (ii) to ask the Member States to use the resilience programme launched by the Commission with the European Union Agency for Cyber Security (ENISA) to test their critical infrastructure by means of 'penetration tests', and (iii) to ask the Member States that had not yet done so to drastically reduce the presence of high-risk suppliers in their telecommunications networks, in particular 5G.

Mr BRETON concluded by referring to the new cyber-defence policy on which he was working with Mr BORRELL and which would soon lay the foundations for

closer European cooperation in cyber-defence, in accordance with the Strategic Compass. He was also working on a European solidarity mechanism in the cyber domain, with a European Security Operations Centres (SOC) infrastructure, a cyber emergency fund which had been requested by the Member States, and a pool of certified cyber experts (from the private sector in particular) who could be deployed if needed.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the proposal for a Council Recommendation in COM(2022) 551/3, for transmission to the Council and, for information, to the European Parliament and the national parliaments.

14. OTHER BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

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

Mr BORRELL began by saying that the European Union Satellite Centre (SatCen) in Madrid, which provided a rapid and reliable analysis of satellite data in order to tackle the current security challenges, would soon be organising a public exhibition in Brussels. He invited all Members of the Commission to visit this very interesting exhibition.

He then noted that foreign ministers had met in Luxembourg on Monday 17 October and that discussions had been very constructive and consensual, in particular as regards providing additional support to Ukraine.

At that meeting it had also been decided to adopt two assistance measures, bringing to more than EUR 3.1 billion the reference amount under the European Peace Facility, which currently allowed the European Union to support the Ukrainian armed forces and to set up a military assistance mission to support Ukraine. The aim

of these measures was to strengthen the capabilities of the Ukrainian armed forces and thus to enable Ukraine to defend its territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, effectively exercise its sovereignty and protect civilians there.

The Ukrainian Foreign Minister had attended the meeting via video conference. He had asked the European Union to prepare further sanctions in the light of Russia's recent attacks on civilian targets, including in the Ukrainian capital. The foreign ministers seemed ready to respond to this request, some nevertheless expressing the hope for a diplomatic solution to the current crisis.

Mr BORRELL then reported that the Foreign Affairs Council had decided to adopt restrictive measures against 11 Iranian individuals and 4 entities because of their role in the killing of a young Iranian and the crackdown on subsequent demonstrations in Iran.

He said that the sale of Iranian drones to Russia had been discussed with the Iranian authorities, adding that this would of course be in breach of international law.

Various other subjects had been discussed, including the temporary deployment of experts on the Armenian side of the international border between Armenia and Azerbaijan to monitor, analyse and report on the situation in the region, the speech of the Chinese President at the 20th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, and the violent fighting in northern Ethiopia.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 15.10.