



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2023) 2453 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 17 May 2023

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2453rd meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 18 April 2023

(afternoon)

PV(2023) 2453 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Tuesday 18 April 2023 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.08 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 19.1 (in part)
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President	Items 8/10 (in part) to 19.2 (in part)
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	Items 1 to 19.1 (in part)
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms GABRIEL	Member	Items 1 to 19.1 (in part)
Mr SCHMIT	Member	Items 1 to 8/10 (in part)
Mr GENTILONI	Member	Items 1 to 19.2
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	Items 1 to 19.2 (in part)
Ms FERREIRA	Member	Items 1 to 13/18 (in part)
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	Items 1 to 19.2
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	Items 8/10 (in part) to 19.3

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Ms SIMSON	Member	Items 11/12 (in part) to 19.3
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

Absent:

Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President
Ms VÁLEAN	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member

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

Mr SAMSOM	Head of Cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS
Ms PREISING	Head of Cabinet to Mr SINKEVIČIUS

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of 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 cabinet
Mr FLOSDORFF	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms HILI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms BUKA	Secretariat-General

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2023) 2453/FINAL; SEC(2023) 2453/FINAL)

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

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF HEADS OF CABINET

(RCC(2023) 2453)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 17 April 2023.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2023) 2449)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2449th meeting of 8 March 2023 and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2450th, 2451st and 2452nd meetings of 14/16, 22 and 29 March 2023 until a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2023) 92)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 14 April 2023 (RCC(2023) 92).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **‘Fit for 55’ – 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)

Line set out in SI(2023) 101/2.

- **‘Fit for 55’ – Deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure, and repeal of Directive 2014/94/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (Regulation) – ERTUG report – 2021/0223 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 102.

- **Amendment of Directive 2011/83/EU concerning financial services contracts concluded at a distance and repeal of Directive 2002/65/EC (Directive) – KOKALARI report – 2022/0147 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 104.

- **Capital Markets Union package:**
 - **Amendment of Regulation (EU) N° 600/2014 as regards enhancing market data transparency, removing obstacles to the emergence of a consolidated tape, optimising the trading obligations and prohibiting receiving payments for forwarding client orders (Regulation) – HÜBNER report – 2021/0385 (COD)**
 - **Amendment of Directive 2014/65/EU on markets in financial instruments (Directive) – HÜBNER report – 2021/0384 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 106.

- **Amendment of Council Decision 2005/671/JHA, as regards its alignment with Union rules on the protection of personal data (Directive) – JAKI report – 2021/0399 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 95.

- **Provisions for fishing in the GFCM (General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean) Agreement area (recast) (Regulation) – ILČIĆ report – 2021/0248 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 107.

- **Commission non-paper on the future of the EU Digital COVID certificate**

Line set out in SI(2023) 109.

- **Oral question O-000016/2023 – Cohesion dimension of EU State aid and de minimis rules**

Line set out in SP(2023) 212.

- **Specific rules relating to medicinal products for human use intended to be placed on the market of Northern Ireland – CANFIN report – 2023/0064 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 105.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Amendment of Directives 2005/29/EC and 2011/83/EU as regards empowering consumers for the green transition through better protection against unfair practices and better information (Directive) – BORZAN report – 2022/0092 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2023) 213/2.

- **Multiple-vote share structures in companies that seek the admission to trading of their shares on an SME growth market (Directive) – SANT report – 2022/0406 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2023) 110.

– **Question Time (Commission) – Legacy of the European Year of Youth**

Information set out in SP(2023) 209/2.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2023) 17 AND /2; RCC(2023) 18)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2023) 17/2 and RCC(2023) 18 of the meetings of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held by videoconference on Wednesday 29 March and 12 April 2023.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2023) 140 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 27 March and 16 April 2023.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2023) 141 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 27 March and 16 April 2023.

**6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2023) 142 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 27 March and 16 April 2023 archived in Decide.

6.4. *SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES*

(SEC(2023) 143 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 17 and 21 April 2023 and of a finalisation written procedure.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2023) 144)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2023) 34)

7.1. *PUBLICATIONS OFFICE – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15*

(PERS(2022) 38 TO /4)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), (1)(b) and (2) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the 'Production of Publications' Directorate in the Publications Office of the European Union (PERS(2022) 38 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 6 December 2022 and 19 January 2023 (PERS(2022) 38/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Ms Susanne GUTJAHR to the post.

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

**7.2. PUBLICATIONS OFFICE – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT
GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2023) 35 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) and (1)(b) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Corporate Services’ Directorate in the Publications Office of the European Union (PERS(2023) 35).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 20 December 2022 and 20 January 2023 (PERS(2023) 35/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants’ qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Ms Christine KORMANN to the post.

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

**7.3. DG MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT – INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF
THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR A DIRECTOR-GENERAL POST AT
GRADE AD15/16
(PERS(2023) 36)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms VĂLEAN, the Commission decided to authorise the publication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2023) 36 for the post of Director-General of DG Mobility and Transport.

This decision would take effect immediately.

7.4. DG INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMES – INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14/15, AND EXTERNAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14, OF A VACANCY NOTICE FOR A DIRECTOR POST (PERS(2023) 37)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr BRETON, the Commission decided to authorise the publication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), (1)(b) and (2) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice set out in PERS(2023) 37 for the post of Director of the ‘Planning, Finance and Digital Solutions’ Directorate at DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs.

This decision would take effect immediately.

7.5. DG ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS – EXTENSION OF THE SECONDMENT IN THE INTEREST OF THE SERVICE, UNDER ARTICLES 37 AND 38 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS, OF AN AD14 OFFICIAL

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr GENTILONI, the Commission decided to extend the secondment in the interest of the service, under Articles 37 and 38 of the Staff Regulations, of Mr José LEANDRO, an AD14 official, to the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in London, as Director representing the European Union, for a 12-month term which may be extended.

It confirmed moreover that, during his secondment, Mr José LEANDRO would enjoy the conditions set out in Annex X to the Staff Regulations.

This decision would take effect on 1 July 2023.

**7.6. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – ANNUAL REPORT ON THE APPLICATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IN 2022
(SEC(2023) 163)**

The Commission took note of the annual report on the application of the Code of Conduct for the Members of the European Commission in 2022 set out in SEC(2023) 163.

**8. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2019/881 AS REGARDS MANAGED SECURITY SERVICES
(COM(2023) 208; RCC(2023) 97)**

**9. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL LAYING DOWN MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN SOLIDARITY AND CAPACITIES IN THE UNION TO DETECT, PREPARE FOR AND RESPOND TO CYBERSECURITY THREATS AND INCIDENTS
(COM(2023) 209 TO /3; RCC(2023) 97)**

**10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – CLOSING THE CYBERSECURITY TALENT GAP TO BOOST THE EU’S COMPETITIVENESS, GROWTH AND RESILIENCE (‘THE CYBERSECURITY SKILLS ACADEMY’)
(COM(2023) 207 AND /2; RCC(2023) 97)**

Ms VESTAGER introduced the package of cybersecurity measures, providing detail on the two main initiatives: a proposal for an EU Regulation on cyber solidarity on the one hand and the first European Cybersecurity Skills Academy on the other. She explained that the magnitude, frequency and increasing impact of cybersecurity incidents posed a major threat to the functioning of network and information

systems and to the European single market – a threat that had been further exacerbated in the context of Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine.

First, she noted that the Regulation on cyber solidarity aimed to strengthen the EU’s cybersecurity capacities by improving the Member States’ concerted crisis management and response capacities. She highlighted in particular the proposal to create a European cyber shield, which would consist of a pan-European infrastructure of national and cross-border Security Operations Centres (SOCs) throughout the EU to detect major cybersecurity threats more quickly and effectively.

The Regulation also provided for the setting up of a cyber emergency mechanism to bolster preparedness and strengthen the EU’s incident response capabilities. This mechanism included the creation of a cybersecurity reserve, inspired by what had happened in Ukraine in the context of the Russian war of aggression. This reserve would make it possible to call on the services provided by contracted trusted providers that were ready to intervene in the event of a large-scale cybersecurity incident.

Ms VESTAGER explained that the total budget for all actions under the Cyber Solidarity Regulation amounted to EUR 1.1 billion, around two thirds of which would be financed by the EU through the Digital Europe Programme.

Second, she highlighted the creation of a Cybersecurity Skills Academy, which was proposed under the European Year of Skills 2023 to ensure a more coordinated approach to closing the cybersecurity talent gap. The Academy would develop in-demand cybersecurity skills and improve their comparability, quality assurance and certification, with the aim of increasing the number of cybersecurity professionals and the proportion of women working in the sector.

Ms VESTAGER concluded by welcoming the significant contribution that this package of measures would make to the European cybersecurity strategy proposed by the Commission in 2020.

Mr SCHINAS pointed out that the proposed measures were based on the work already carried out by the EU to strengthen collective resilience in the face of growing cyber threats. In particular, he mentioned the Directive aimed at providing a high common level of cybersecurity across the EU (NIS 2) and the Regulation on cybersecurity. He explained that, by proposing an EU Regulation on cyber solidarity, the Commission was responding to the Member States' invitation to strengthen European cyber resilience and upholding its commitment made in the recent joint Communication on cyber defence to prepare an EU initiative on this subject.

The EU was facing an alarming IT skills shortage, where the number of cybersecurity professionals was far too low given the scale of and growing increase in cyber threats. In this connection, he welcomed the setting up of a European Cybersecurity Skills Academy, which would bring together private and public initiatives to strengthen skills at European and national level. The creation of an online platform for digital skills and jobs would guarantee a single point of access that brought together training and certification opportunities provided throughout the EU, which would boost their visibility.

In conclusion, Mr SCHINAS welcomed the European approach exemplified by these proposals, which provided modern measures adapted to the targeted objective and based on the EU's values.

Mr BRETON rounded off the presentation of the package of measures by emphasising that, when it came to cybersecurity, the integrated digital market was made vulnerable by the weakest link in the chain. He recalled the progress achieved on the regulatory front since the proposal for a European cybersecurity strategy in 2020, especially through the legislation proposed for critical infrastructure and essential entities and the new rules put forward for the security of digital products.

The missing element of the strategy, however, was operational cooperation, especially because of the difficulty in sharing sensitive national security information

between Member States. The approach advocated by this package of measures was therefore to encourage cooperation and improve operational cybersecurity capabilities throughout Europe through joint long-term investment supported by the EU budget.

In this connection, Mr BRETON pointed out that the proposed Regulation would strengthen EU solidarity in order to better detect, prepare for and respond to cyber threats. First, he explained that, although there already were Security Operations Centres (SOCs) tasked with identifying and responding to cyber threats in certain Member States, their work lacked sufficient coordination at present. The joint infrastructure proposed under the European cyber shield would use state-of-the-art technology, such as artificial intelligence and advanced data analytics, to detect and share timely warnings on cyber threats and incidents across borders.

Mr BRETON noted that a pilot project had been launched the previous year to validate this concept, with over EUR 115 million committed for operational cybersecurity capabilities. In April 2023, the Commission had selected three cross-border SOC consortia bringing together public bodies from 17 Member States and Iceland. He also stressed that all of these capabilities were, by definition, dual and could therefore be used in a military setting in line with the EU's new defence doctrine – the Strategic Compass.

Second, he referred to the creation of a cyber emergency mechanism for carrying out joint risk analysis and vulnerability testing, in order to lay the foundations for mutual assistance between the Member States. He emphasised the preparedness measures that already existed in this regard, in partnership with the Member States, concerning existing energy, transport, digital and space infrastructure vulnerabilities.

The proposal also provided for the setting up of an EU cybersecurity reserve for the prior identification of certified and trusted private service providers, in order to support the defence effort in the event of an attack. This reserve would be ready to

be deployed at the request of a Member State or an EU institution or even a third country if necessary. It would also be possible for a Member State to provide financial support to another Member State as mutual assistance in the event of a cyber attack.

Third, Mr BRETON indicated that the Regulation on cyber solidarity included a mechanism for analysing major incidents that had arisen in order to identify what should be improved to strengthen the EU's cybersecurity based on lessons learnt.

Lastly, he referred to the second element of the cybersecurity package: the creation of a European Cybersecurity Skills Academy. This initiative was essential to enable the EU to quickly increase its training capacities and its ability to respond to the needs expressed by public authorities and businesses in the context of the global race for skills.

Mr BRETON concluded by stressing that work was also under way to strengthen cooperation with NATO and the US government on cybersecurity and securing critical networks.

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

- the importance of cybersecurity for public administrations, and the need in this context to attract staff with the required expertise by offering competitive working conditions;
- the new challenges linked to the use of spyware such as Pegasus or Predator, which had to form an integral part of the European cybersecurity strategy;
- the need for the EU institutions to have a certain degree of independence in order to guarantee their own protection against cyber threats.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2023) 208, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments and, for information, to the Court of Auditors;
- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2023) 209/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments;
- approved the Communication in COM(2023) 207/2 for transmission to the European Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

11. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON THE KEY ENABLING FACTORS FOR SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

(COM(2023) 205 AND /2; SWD(2023) 205 AND /2; RCC(2023) 95)

12. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON IMPROVING THE PROVISION OF DIGITAL SKILLS IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

(COM(2023) 206 AND /2; SWD(2023) 205 AND /2; RCC(2023) 95)

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Ms VESTAGER introduced the two proposals being presented to the College that day to improve education in digital skills. The EU had limited powers with respect to education, which was why the initiatives being tabled that day were proposals for Council Recommendations, based on the conclusions of the structured dialogue between the Commission and the Member States on digital education and skills, which had taken place throughout 2022. Despite the progress made and the excellent examples of innovation that existed, the

Member States' concerted efforts had so far not succeeded in delivering high-quality and inclusive digital education across Europe.

As a result, the Recommendations called on the Member States to mainstream the development of digital skills consistently at all levels of education and training provision and to address the shortage of IT professionals by adopting inclusive strategies to make the most of everyone's talents. Only half of Europeans had basic digital skills, and three out of four businesses could not find staff with the right digital skills.

With that in mind, Ms VESTAGER noted that the aim was to propose guidelines and measures that could be implemented by the Member States, promoting a whole-of-government and multi-stakeholder approach. Digital skills needed to be improved across all fields of study and all professions, which meant that all government ministries would share responsibility for fostering development of those skills.

Moreover, a key measure to be implemented by the Commission focused on facilitating the recognition of digital skills. The European Digital Skills Certificate that would be proposed would seek to improve confidence in certification and its acceptance throughout the EU. This would help to ensure widespread, quick and easy recognition of an individual's digital skills by employers and training providers, including beyond national borders. To that end, the Commission would carry out a pilot project with several Member States, on the basis of which the final version of the certificate would be rolled out in 2024.

Lastly, Ms VESTAGER reminded the College of the ambitious objective the EU had set itself with its Digital Compass, whereby at least 80% of all adults in Europe should have basic digital skills by 2030. The proposed strategy should also make it possible to create an additional 20 million ICT experts, including many more women. This vision was widely supported by the Member States, which planned to invest EUR 26 billion in digital skills under the Recovery and Resilience Facility.

By way of conclusion, she welcomed the excellent cooperation on this issue over the last 2 years, which had seen the various Commission departments concerned come together to produce high-quality work.

Mr SCHINAS then took the floor to present the background to the proposals. Shaping Europe's digital future had been a priority for the Commission since the beginning of the current term of office, and the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the importance and urgency of that objective. The pandemic had made it possible to speed up the digital transformation even further, but had also exposed the huge digital divide that existed, with a growing imbalance in terms of knowledge and skills adding to pre-existing inequalities.

In order to address these challenges, the Digital Education Action Plan called for greater cooperation at European level, a more structured framework for developing these skills and a European and whole-of-government approach. The Member States would be required to draw up an annual strategy to address any remaining shortcomings and gaps with respect to digital education and training.

In conclusion, Mr SCHINAS stated that these initiatives were an essential and timely contribution to the 2023 European Year of Skills, and highlighted the synergies with the cybersecurity package presented earlier.

Ms GABRIEL then drew the College's attention to the revolutionary technological developments that required society to adapt rapidly. She referred in particular to the impact of artificial intelligence and the risks related to disinformation. It was therefore essential to prepare European citizens for these changes, particularly by equipping them with new skills. She regretted that only minimal progress had been made over the last 5 years with respect to European targets, noting, for example, that only 54% of Europeans had basic digital skills.

She then presented the first proposal for a Council Recommendation on key enabling factors for successful digital education.

First, the Recommendation proposed measures to help Member States ensure universal access to high-quality and inclusive digital education and training. Identifying the segments of the population that until now had not been given sufficient consideration was a key aspect of addressing inequalities.

Second, Ms GABRIEL stressed the importance of encouraging teachers to use digital technologies in an educational setting, noting that fewer than 40% of teachers had said they were prepared to use these technologies before the pandemic. It was thus recommended that all teachers should follow an advanced training programme to become confident and informed users of digital technology.

Third, a system-wide approach to digital education was needed to ensure better coordination between all levels of government. Authorities responsible for education were often overstretched and lacked expertise in digital matters. A single national strategy covering digital education and skills should therefore be drawn up and monitored regularly to guarantee structural involvement at all levels.

Lastly, Ms GABRIEL stressed the importance of bridging the digital divide by ensuring that every school in the EU had access to a sufficiently fast internet connection, regardless of the school's size or location. Fewer than 20% of pupils in the EU currently attended a school with an internet connection faster than 100 Megabits per second (Mbps), which hampered the potential of digital technologies in education.

She then presented the second proposal for a Council Recommendation on improving the teaching of digital skills in education and training.

The first aim was to improve the ability of Member States' education and training systems to equip learners with digital skills. To achieve this, IT needed to be integrated into the curriculum and made available to all students, in the same way as maths, science or languages.

Second, Ms GABRIEL referred to the creation of a pool of specialist teachers that would involve strengthening cooperation with the private sector. This would be a mutually beneficial partnership, as digital professionals were keen to support educational activities and teachers could benefit greatly from their expertise.

Moreover, education provision at university level had to ensure that the demand for digital skills could be met in all sectors and across all professions. This involved increasing the number of ICT specialists, with a bigger role for women.

Lastly, digital reskilling and upskilling for adults were also important factors, requiring better cooperation between different education sectors and the provision of digital skills training.

Ms GABRIEL concluded by highlighting the fundamental importance of successfully implementing these measures to ensure that the Member States could act faster to plug existing gaps. Building on the success of the structured dialogue with the Member States on education and digital skills, she proposed setting up a High Level Group on this topic to ensure that it remained a political priority. In her view, this would make it possible to take a cross-cutting and whole-of-government approach, both between the Member States and inside the Commission.

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

- appreciation for the measures proposed, which were considered timely and essential for the twin green and digital transition;
- the particularly pronounced digital divide among vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, as well as gender bias that restricted women's full participation in the digital economy;
- with that in mind, support for the inclusive nature of the proposals as a means of tapping into all the talent in Europe;

- the fundamental role of teachers and educators, who should be viewed as partners rather than sub-contractors, and who needed to have digital training themselves so that they could develop the requisite skills in their students;
- the importance of high-quality digital infrastructure, including in rural areas and for people of all ages and with all levels of training.

Following these presentations, the Commission adopted the proposals for a Council Recommendation in COM(2023) 205/2 and COM(2023) 206/2 for transmission to the Council and, for information, to the European Parliament and the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2023) 205/2, the contents of which were noted.

**13. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON THE REVIEW OF THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND DEPOSIT INSURANCE FRAMEWORK CONTRIBUTING TO COMPLETING THE BANKING UNION
(COM(2023) 225 TO /3; RCC(2023) 98)**

**14. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) N° 806/2014 AS REGARDS EARLY INTERVENTION MEASURES, CONDITIONS FOR RESOLUTION AND FUNDING OF RESOLUTION ACTION
(COM(2023) 226 TO /3; SWD(2023) 225; SWD(2023) 226; SEC(2023) 230; RCC(2023) 98)**

15. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING DIRECTIVE 2014/59/EU AS REGARDS EARLY INTERVENTION MEASURES, CONDITIONS FOR RESOLUTION

AND FINANCING OF RESOLUTION ACTION

(COM(2023) 227 TO /3; SWD(2023) 225; SWD(2023) 226; SEC(2023) 230; RCC(2023) 98)

16. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING DIRECTIVE 2014/49/EU AS REGARDS THE SCOPE OF DEPOSIT PROTECTION, USE OF DEPOSIT GUARANTEE SCHEMES FUNDS, CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION, AND TRANSPARENCY

(COM(2023) 228 TO /3; SWD(2023) 225; SWD(2023) 226; SEC(2023) 230; RCC(2023) 98)

17. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING DIRECTIVE 2014/59/EU AND REGULATION (EU) N° 806/2014 AS REGARDS CERTAIN ASPECTS OF THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENT FOR OWN FUNDS AND ELIGIBLE LIABILITIES

(COM(2023) 229; RCC(2023) 98)

18. REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL ON THE SINGLE SUPERVISORY MECHANISM ESTABLISHED PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU) N° 1024/2013

(COM(2023) 212; RCC(2023) 98)

The PRESIDENT asked the Members of the Commission responsible to present the package of proposals on the Crisis Management and Deposit Insurance (CMDI) framework.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS welcomed the significant progress made by European banks since the 2008 economic and financial crisis, in particular by setting up new European supervision and resolution systems under the Banking Union. The negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had not been worsened by the banking

system as, by helping to manage the impact in the best way possible, the banks had been part of the solution.

However, while the European resolution system was working properly, with strict rules allowing national authorities to deal effectively with banking crises, there was still room for improvement. The proposals presented that day were intended to deliver on the Eurogroup agreement of June 2022 and take another major step towards completing the Banking Union.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS pointed out that the overall objective of the crisis management and deposit guarantee framework was to preserve financial stability and protect taxpayers in the context of bank failures. The recent failures of certain banks in the United States and Switzerland, and the resulting turmoil in the international banking sector, merely highlighted the importance for the EU of having an effective system in place to deal with the difficulties that banks of all sizes could face.

When small and medium-sized banks failed, it could prove difficult to attribute losses to depositors due to the risk of financial contagion. As a result, the authorities had to seek solutions outside the EU resolution framework, which had often involved the use of taxpayers' money instead of the bank's internal resources or private industry-funded safety nets.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS said that the main goal of the reform of the crisis management and deposit guarantee framework was to deal with more bank failures using the tools available in the European resolution system, while retaining sufficient flexibility to take account of the specifics of each case. The second goal was to facilitate the use of the bank-funded deposit guarantee scheme (DGS) for crisis management, thus limiting the risk of exposure of taxpayers in the event of bank failure. He underlined the fact that the first and main line of defence in the event of a crisis must be a bank's internal capacity to absorb losses. Therefore, the use of

deposit guarantee scheme funds would be subject to strict conditions when applied to small and medium-sized banks in the context of resolution.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS ended by emphasising that the reform was not a response to the recent developments on financial markets; the EU already had a properly functioning banking crisis management system with strong safety nets and high standards. The proposals presented that day in response to the Eurogroup's request entailed a number of improvements based on experience in recent years. Efforts would have to continue to complete the Banking Union, including the introduction of a common deposit insurance scheme, in order to ensure the financial stability of the EU.

Ms McGUINNESS said that, thanks to the European regulation and supervision framework, the EU banking system was now much stronger than before the 2008 global financial crisis. However, the Banking Union was not yet complete, which was why the Eurogroup had asked the Commission in June 2022 to improve the crisis management and deposit insurance framework for banks.

The Commission had met this challenge by putting specific proposals on the table which made sense economically and were politically balanced. These proposals would therefore improve consistency and ensure a level playing field, while taking due account of national situations.

Ms McGUINNESS stressed that there was no link between this reform proposal and the recent bank failures in the United States and Switzerland, and that the package presented that day brought about structural improvements based on years of observation. She referred to the specific challenges involved in managing the failure of small and medium-sized banks, which relied mainly on equity and deposits for funding. In particular, allocating losses to depositors of a failing bank could prove difficult due to the risk of a loss of confidence by depositors of other banks. Because of that, the resolution framework had not been used as much it could have been, and

some national authorities had resorted instead to public funds to manage bank failures.

Taking stock of the main features of the package presented to the College that day, Ms McGUINNESS pointed out first that, as requested by the Eurogroup, the scope covered by the resolution framework would be broadened to allow for the inclusion of medium-sized banks, under certain conditions. However, the approach remained discretionary, and both EU and national resolution authorities would be free to choose between resolution and national insolvency arrangements. New criteria had been laid down to frame that choice to ensure that authorities could choose resolution when that was in the public interest.

Second, she commented that the European Union had to have the necessary tools at its disposal in order to effectively manage bank resolutions in the event of failure. This included having the necessary funding capacity to facilitate the transfer of failing medium-sized banks to healthy banks. An essential principle to ensure a level playing field and market discipline was that banks within the scope of resolution needed internal loss-absorption capacity in the same way as larger banks, to which the resolution regime applied by default. In the event of resolution, however, if this absorption capacity proved to be insufficient, deposit guarantee schemes would be able to intervene to help finance the sale of a failing bank. This would allow resolution authorities to use the funding of Deposit Guarantee Schemes, including access to the Single Resolution Fund, if they thought that allocating losses to deposits could lead to bank runs.

This possibility would only be granted under strict conditions, thus (i) only if the resolution authority considered it necessary to preserve financial stability, (ii) only to finance a market exit of the failing bank, (iii) only for banks that prepared for resolution and put in place an adequate internal loss-absorbing capacity, and (iv) only if it was less costly for deposit guarantee schemes to pay the insured part of deposits in the bank up to a limit of EUR 100 000 per person.

Ms McGUINNESS ended by saying that, with these proposals, the Commission was delivering on the Eurogroup's mandate and improving the way bank failures were handled in the Union. The approach chosen was good for the economy as it protected financial stability, and for society as a whole as it reduced the risk of bailouts. In her view, this was a package that would therefore allow policy-makers to continue on the path towards the completion of the Banking Union.

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

- the support of the College as a whole for this important package of measures, which would enable the competent authorities to organise the orderly market exit of a failing bank, regardless of its size and business model and using a wide range of tools;
- the categorical imperative of protecting the money and savings of European taxpayers, as well as maintaining the confidence of savers and the stability of the EU banking system;
- the importance of the EU paying particular attention to small and medium-sized banks with a view to extending the concept of public interest to the regional context in which these banks often operate;
- for some, the need to examine in detail and on a regular basis the governance of the mechanisms put in place to manage the resolution of potential bank failures efficiently on the basis of a methodology providing for a clear division of competences and responsibilities, in particular between national entities and the Single Resolution Board;
- the particular priority to be given to establishing clear and transparent governance of the resolution of any banking crises;

- a reminder of the EU's responsibility to guarantee a level playing field and the importance of attaching conditions to the use of protection mechanisms to ensure compliance with competition rules throughout the single market, in particular as regards State aid;
- the need to consider, in the next stages of the completion of the Banking Union, an escape clause regarding bank bail-outs in the event of a systemic crisis.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS welcomed the adoption of this package of measures, which represented another important step in the completion of the Banking Union. He confirmed the importance of addressing some of the issues raised during the discussion in more detail in the future, in particular the question of governance and the assessment of banks' prudential margins. Work should therefore continue in full compliance with the key principles of preserving financial stability, protecting taxpayers' money and increasing savers' confidence.

Ms McGUINNESS pointed out that, although they had already been used twice, the mechanisms gradually put in place were intended to be used as rarely as possible. She also noted the importance of the proposed package of measures for advancing the legislative work on the establishment of a European Deposit Insurance Scheme (EDIS).

The financial sector was undergoing profound change that needed to be understood in all its complexity at a time when the EU was in the process of completing its Banking Union. It was in this specific context that the Commission was preparing a report on the non-banking sector, which should be ready by the end of the year.

Finally, Ms McGUINNESS thanked all the Members of the College for their contributions to these important proposals, which would improve the ability of any bank to exit the market in an orderly manner, regardless of its size and business model, using the tools created for that purpose.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the Communication in COM(2023) 225/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and, for information, to the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2023) 226/3 and the proposal for a Directive in COM(2023) 227/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee and the national parliaments, and, for information, to the Committee of the Regions, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2023) 225, SWD(2023) 226 and SEC(2023) 230, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Directive in COM(2023) 228/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments, and, for information, to the European Data Protection Supervisor, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2023) 225, SWD(2023) 226 and SEC(2023) 230, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Directive in COM(2023) 229 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee and national parliaments and, for information, to the Committee of the Regions;
- approved the report in COM(2023) 212 for transmission to the European Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

19. OTHER BUSINESS

19.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The PRESIDENT reported on her visit to China on 5-7 April, which she had undertaken together with the French President, Mr Emmanuel MACRON. She referred to the main topics raised during the discussions and concluded by saying that the EU-China High Level Dialogue should continue on the basis of reasonable and measurable objectives.

Mr BORRELL briefly referred to the latest developments in the field of external relations, in particular as regards the European approach to relations with China and partner countries in the G7. He also briefed the College on the latest developments in Sudan.

The Commission took note of this information.

19.2. IMPORTS OF AGRI-FOOD PRODUCTS FROM UKRAINE

Mr DOMBROVSKIS reported on the situation regarding imports of certain agri-food products from Ukraine and on the recent restrictions put in place by certain Member States bordering Ukraine. In this context, he outlined the various measures that could be envisaged to address the concerns of the Member States in question and allow the smooth transit of Ukrainian grain to world markets.

The Commission took note of this information.

19.3. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION, IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'CONNECTING ALL EUROPEAN CAPITALS AND PEOPLE

THROUGH A HIGH-SPEED TRAIN NETWORK'
(C(2023) 2617)

Ms JOUROVÁ presented the proposal for a Decision submitted to the College for approval concerning the request for registration of a European citizens' initiative entitled, in the authentic language (Dutch), *Alle Europese hoofdsteden en burgers verbinden door middel van een Hogesnelheidstrein-netwerk* ('Connecting all European capitals and people through a high-speed train network').

This initiative called for connecting all European capitals through high-speed railway lines by linking the existing high-speed railway networks and building high-speed lines where these did not yet exist.

Ms JOUROVÁ stressed that the College's task that day was to decide only on the registration of the initiative and not at this stage to analyse its substance or political suitability. Noting that the request fell within the powers conferred on the Commission, she 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 seven Member States, the Commission would then examine the substance of the proposal.

She then drew attention to the fact that this was the 100th European Citizens' Initiative to be registered by the Commission, out of the 125 initiatives it had received since the launch of this instrument of participatory democracy in April 2012. Of the 29 initiatives registered since 2020, 7 related to environmental issues and 6 to animal welfare, both areas of public concern which had also featured prominently in the discussions of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

At the end of this presentation, the Commission confirmed that the initiative 'Connecting all European capitals and people through a high-speed train network' met the necessary conditions for registration. It therefore decided, in

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accordance with C(2023) 2617, to inform the group of organisers and authorised Ms JOUROVÁ to sign the reply on behalf of the College, in the authentic language (Dutch), 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.

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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 15.19.