



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

**PV(2023) 2471 final**

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

Brussels, 15 November 2023

# TEXTE EN

## MINUTES

**of the 2471<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Commission**

**held in Brussels**

**(Berlaymont)**

**on Tuesday 24 October 2023**

**(morning)**

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**PV(2023) 2471 final**

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**Single sitting: Tuesday 24 October 2023 (morning)**

The sitting opened at 9.00 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

**Present:**

|                        |                                         |                         |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ms von der LEYEN       | President                               |                         |
| Mr ŠEFČOVIČ            | Executive Vice-President                |                         |
| Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES | High Representative /<br>Vice-President |                         |
| Ms JOUROVÁ             | Vice-President                          |                         |
| Mr SCHINAS             | Vice-President                          |                         |
| Mr HAHN                | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr SCHMIT              | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr GENTILONI           | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI       | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms FERREIRA            | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms KYRIAKIDES          | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms DALLI               | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms JOHANSSON           | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr LENARČIČ            | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms VÁLEAN              | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr VÁRHELYI            | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms URPILAINEN          | Member                                  | Items 1 to 13 (in part) |
| Ms SIMSON              | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms McGUINNESS          | Member                                  | Items 8 (in part) to 13 |
| Ms IVANOVA             | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr HOEKSTRA            | Member                                  |                         |

Absent:

|                |                          |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Ms VESTAGER    | Executive Vice-President |
| Mr DOMBROVSKIS | Executive Vice-President |
| Ms ŠUICA       | Vice-President           |
| Mr BRETON      | Member                   |
| Mr REYNDEERS   | Member                   |
| Mr SINKEVIČIUS | Member                   |

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

|               |                                          |                           |
|---------------|------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ms VEGNERE    | Deputy Head of Cabinet to Mr DOMBROVSKIS |                           |
| Mr SCICLUNA   | Head of Cabinet to Ms ŠUICA              |                           |
| Mr MOUTARLIER | Head of Cabinet to Mr BRETON             |                           |
| Ms TUTS       | Head of Cabinet to Mr REYNDEERS          |                           |
| Mr TANELI     | Head of Cabinet to Ms URPILAINEN         | Item 13 (in part)         |
| Ms PREISING   | Head of Cabinet to Mr SINKEVIČIUS        |                           |
| Ms O'HEA      | Member of Ms McGUINNESS's cabinet        | Items 1 to 8<br>(in part) |

The following also sat in:

|                      |                                                                                |                            |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Mr SEIBERT           | Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT                                               |                            |
| Mr LADENBURGER       | Deputy Director-General, Legal Service                                         |                            |
| Ms SPINANT           | Acting Director-General, DG Communication                                      |                            |
| Mr MAMER             | Head of the Spokesperson's Service and<br>Chief Spokesperson of the Commission | Items 10/11 to 13          |
| Ms PETKOVA           | Director of Coordination and Administration in<br>the PRESIDENT's cabinet      |                            |
| Mr FLOSDORFF         | Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet                                             |                            |
| Mr VAN KEMSEKE       | Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet                                             | Items 9 to 13<br>(in part) |
| Mr WHELAN            | Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet                                             | Item 8                     |
| Ms HOPMEIER          | Member of the PRESIDENT's cabinet                                              | Item 9                     |
| Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC | Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General                                        |                            |

The following also sat in by videoconference:

Mr ZELENSKYY

President of Ukraine

Opening of the sitting

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

The PRESIDENT opened the sitting by welcoming the President of Ukraine, Mr Volodymyr ZELENSKYY, who was attending the Commission's weekly meeting by videoconference. She noted that it was an especially opportune moment to reiterate the EU's unwavering support for Ukraine, as the attention of the international community was turning to the conflict in the Middle East.

At the recent EU-US Summit, both parties had confirmed the commitments they had made with regard to military and financial support for Ukraine. Overall, EU support for Ukraine now totalled EUR 83 billion following the EU's disbursement of the latest tranche of aid. In addition to this amount, the Commission had proposed that a further EUR 50 billion would be provided from 2024 to 2027 through a dedicated Facility to support Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction and modernisation. The new Facility should be adopted by the Council before the end of the year as part of the mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework.

The PRESIDENT also said that the Commission was preparing its next progress report on the enlargement process and that she planned to visit Mr ZELENSKYY before the report was approved by the College on 8 November.

Mr ZELENSKYY thanked the College for inviting him to attend its weekly meeting and the PRESIDENT for her warm welcome and unwavering support. He said that Russia's invasion of Ukraine would have a significant impact on the history of his country, and it had had the immediate consequence of reinforcing Ukraine's decision to become part of the European project of the Union.

The collapse of the Soviet Union had raised the issue of the political sovereignty of the countries that came into being following the demise of the Soviet bloc, and a power struggle had been playing out ever since. In this difficult context, the EU had shown great unity in its efforts to support candidate countries on the road to accession.

In particular, Mr ZELENSKYY considered that the EU was offering clear prospects for the countries of the Western Balkans, Moldova and Georgia, as well as for his own country; in time, these countries were set to become part of what he called the EU's

great continental project. This was bringing Ukraine closer to its European roots and would enable the Union to redraw its borders.

Mr ZELENSKYY spoke of his optimism with respect to the EU, which had consistently supported Ukraine's aspirations for independence and sovereignty. He thanked the EU and its Member States for their humanitarian, financial, military and political support for Ukraine and welcomed the fact that a new Facility would support Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction and modernisation. He hoped that the European co-legislators would be able to approve this Facility before the end of the year, so that the first tranche of aid could be disbursed to Ukraine in January 2024.

He also called on the College to continue its work regarding the use of the Russian assets frozen under the sanctions imposed on Russia and, more generally, to continue to exert strong pressure on Russia and on any other nation that might oppose peace. In addition, he thanked the EU Member States that had bolstered Ukraine's air-defence capabilities.

He then referred to the ongoing efforts to implement the seven recommendations issued to Ukraine by the EU when the European Council had unanimously decided to grant Ukraine candidate status on 23 June 2022. The enlargement process was now the main driver of a number of key reforms based on European democratic values, with a great deal of work having been undertaken in those areas despite the tragic context of Russian aggression.

More specifically, Mr ZELENSKYY noted that, on 17 October 2023, the Ukrainian parliament had adopted a law that sought to increase the financial oversight of politically exposed persons. This law supplemented the measures that had already been adopted under a vast reform of Ukraine's Constitution and justice system. The reforms being implemented also included legislation laying down a selection procedure for judges at Ukraine's Constitutional Court, including a preselection procedure based on a transparent assessment of candidates' integrity and professional skills. He also referred to the progress already made with respect to combating the influence of vested interests

in the media, with a media law having been adopted to bring Ukrainian legislation in line with EU law.

Lastly, good progress had also been made in terms of implementing the EU's other recommendations. In particular, he referred to efforts to tackle corruption and money laundering, with the aim of curbing the excessive influence of oligarchs on the economy, politics and public life, as well as the implementation of a legal framework that applied to national minorities.

Mr ZELENSKYY considered that all the progress made and the reforms undertaken should make it possible for accession negotiations to begin by the end of the year, so that Ukraine's European aspirations could be realised and that the EU could continue to work for peace and stability on the continent.

The PRESIDENT stressed that, at this crucial stage of the enlargement process, candidate countries had to make a clear choice between democracy and autocracy. The Member States had unanimously agreed to grant Ukraine candidate status, which was testament to the EU's desire to see Ukraine become part of the European family. On 8 November, the Commission would issue its assessment of the progress made by Ukraine with respect to its reforms and, at its meeting on 14 and 15 December, the European Council would use this assessment as the basis for its potential decision to launch accession negotiations. She congratulated Mr ZELENSKYY for the impressive work already undertaken against the backdrop of the war.

Mr BORRELL then briefly reported on the discussions at the Foreign Affairs Council held the previous day, during which EU foreign ministers had reiterated their unconditional support for Ukraine. Discussions had focused on the issue of the EU's military and financial support, demining operations and efforts to strengthen the country's resilience. Moreover, he noted that the EU would continue to support the peace formula proposed by Ukraine's President at the third Summit on its implementation, which would be held in Malta on 28 and 29 October.

Mr VÁRHELYI explained that, when assessing the progress made by Ukraine, the Commission would cover all the accession criteria and would therefore go beyond the seven recommendations made by the European Council in June 2022. He noted that a great deal of progress had been made by Ukraine and that the Commission's assessment would also provide clear guidance on future reform priorities.

The PRESIDENT concluded by stressing that it was essential for the EU to show it was reliable and steadfast vis-à-vis Ukraine while the media's attention shifted to new emerging international crises.

\* \* \*

**1. AGENDAS**

**(OJ(2023) 2471/FINAL; SEC(2023) 2471/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) 2471)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 23 October 2023.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

The Commission decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2466<sup>th</sup>, 2467<sup>th</sup>, 2468<sup>th</sup>, 2469<sup>th</sup> and 2470<sup>th</sup> meetings of 12 and 27 September and 3, 11 and 17 October 2023 until a later meeting.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS**

**(RCC(2023) 170)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 20 October 2023 (RCC(2023) 170).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Establishment of a Single Market emergency instrument and repeal of Council Regulation (EC) N° 2679/98 (Regulation) – SCHWAB report – 2022/0278 (COD)**
- **Amendment of Regulations (EU) 2016/424, (EU) 2016/425, (EU) 2016/426, (EU) 2019/1009 and (EU) N° 305/2011 as regards emergency procedures for the conformity assessment, adoption of common specifications and market surveillance due to a Single Market emergency (Regulation) – SCHWAB report – 2022/0279 (COD)**
- **Amendment of Directives 2000/14/EC, 2006/42/EC, 2010/35/EU, 2013/29/EU, 2014/28/EU, 2014/29/EU, 2014/30/EU, 2014/31/EU, 2014/32/EU, 2014/33/EU, 2014/34/EU, 2014/35/EU, 2014/53/EU and 2014/68/EU as regards emergency procedures for the conformity assessment, adoption of common specifications and market surveillance due to a Single Market emergency (Directive) – SCHWAB report – 2022/0280 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 357.

- **Laying-down of harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products, amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/1020 and repeal of Regulation (EU) 305/2011 (Regulation) – DOLESCHAL report – 2022/0094 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 391.

- **Establishment of a framework for ensuring a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials and amendment of Regulations (EU) 168/2013, (EU) 2018/858, (EU) 2018/1724 and (EU) 2019/1020 (Regulation) – BEER report – 2023/0079 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 394/2.

- **Harmonised rules on artificial intelligence (Artificial Intelligence Act) and amendment of certain Union legislative acts (Regulation) – BENIFEI &**

**TUDORACHE report – 2021/0106 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 395/3.

- **European Union geographical indications for wine, spirit drinks and agricultural products, and quality schemes for agricultural products, amendment of Regulations (EU) N° 1308/2013, (EU) 2017/1001 and (EU) 2019/787 and repeal of Regulation (EU) N° 1151/2012 (Regulation) – DE CASTRO report – 2022/0089 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 396.

- **Amendment of Regulations (EU) N° 1227/2011 and (EU) 2019/942 to improve the Union’s protection against market manipulation in the wholesale energy market (Regulation) – CARVALHO report – 2023/0076 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 398.

- **‘Fit for 55’:**
  - **Internal markets for renewable and natural gases and for hydrogen (Regulation – recast) – BUZEK report – 2021/0424 (COD)**
  - **Common rules for the internal markets in renewable and natural gases and in hydrogen (Directive) – GEIER report – 2021/0425 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 400.

- **Anti-Money Laundering package:**
  - **Prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing (Regulation) – HEINÄLUOMA & CARÊME report – 2021/0239 (COD)**

- **Mechanisms to be put in place by the Member States for the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or terrorist financing and repealing Directive (EU) 2015/849 (Directive) – NIEDERMAYER & TANG report – 2021/0250 (COD)**
- **Establishment of the Authority for Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism and amendment of Regulations (EU) N° 1093/2010, (EU) N° 1094/2010, (EU) N° 1095/2010 (Regulation) – RADEV report – 2021/0240 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 389/2.

- **Nature restoration (Regulation) – LUENA report – 2022/0195 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 402/2.

- **‘Fit for 55’: Methane emissions reduction in the energy sector and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/942 (Regulation) – PAULUS & CANFIN (ex-SARDONE) report – 2021/0423 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 409.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/1242 as regards strengthening the CO<sub>2</sub> emission performance standards for new heavy-duty vehicles and integrating reporting obligations, and repeal of Regulation (EU) 2018/956 (Regulation) – JADOT report – 2023/0042 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 408.

- **Key enabling factors for digital education (Council recommendation) – 2023/0099 (NLE) / Improving the provision of digital skills in education and training (Council recommendation) – 2023/0100 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 406.

- **Reply to a questionnaire from the French National Assembly’s Committee of Inquiry into the causes of France’s inability to achieve the objectives of successive plans to control the impacts of plant protection products on human and environmental health and in particular on the conditions for the exercise of the missions of the public authorities in charge of health safety**

Line set out in SNP(2023) 16.

- **Preparation of a videoconference meeting between the DG MOVE Director for Land transport, Mr Kristian SCHMIDT, and the Committee of inquiry set up by the French Parliament on the French rail freight sector, including the Commission’s formal investigation on the liberalisation of rail freight and its consequences for the future, on 26 October 2023**

Line set out in SNP(2023) 17.

- **General budget of the European Union for the financial year 2024 – All sections – MUREŞAN & UŠAKOV report – 2023/0264 (BUD)**

Line set out in SI(2023) 401.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Standards of quality and safety for substances of human origin intended for human application and repealing Directives 2002/98/EC and 2004/23/EC (Regulation) – COLIN-OESTERLÉ report – 2022/0216 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2023) 404.

- **Results of the European Parliament’s October II 2023 part-session**

Information set out in SP(2023) 522.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION  
(RCC(2023) 36)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2023) 36 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 18 October 2023.

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

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED  
(SEC(2023) 340 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 16 and 22 October 2023.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT  
(SEC(2023) 341 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 16 and 22 October 2023.

**6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS  
(SEC(2023) 342 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 16 and 22 October 2023 archived in Decide.

**6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES  
(SEC(2023) 343 TO /3)**

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 23 October and 3 November 2023, and of a finalisation written procedure.

**7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS  
(SEC(2023) 344)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS  
(PERS(2023) 97)**

**7.1. *DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF A LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF HEAD OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO ALBANIA, AT GRADE AD14/15*  
(PERS(2023) 98)**

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 Albania (at grade AD14/15) set out in PERS(2023) 98.

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.

**7.2. *DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF A LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF DEPUTY HEAD OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO MOROCCO, AT GRADE AD9-14*  
(PERS(2023) 99)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to approve the list of candidates for the post of Deputy Head

of the European Union Delegation to Morocco (at grade AD9-14) set out in PERS(2023) 99.

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.

**7.3. *DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF A LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF DEPUTY HEAD OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO TÜRKIYE, AT GRADE AD9-14 (PERS(2023) 100)***

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to approve the list of candidates for the post of Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Türkiye (at grade AD9-14) set out in PERS(2023) 100.

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 EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL – REPORT ON EU POLICY INITIATIVES FOR THE PROMOTION OF INVESTMENTS IN CLEAN TECHNOLOGIES (PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF MEASURES TAKEN BY THE EU TO STIMULATE INVESTMENT INTO CLEAN TECHNOLOGIES AND THE IMPACT OF THE US INFLATION REDUCTION ACT ON INVESTMENT) (COM(2023) 684 TO /4; RCC(2023) 178)***

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ began by stressing the importance of this preliminary assessment of the measures taken by the EU to promote investment in European clean technologies. He felt that decarbonisation must go hand in hand with European reindustrialisation. In the light of this objective, he highlighted the relevance of the in-depth review carried out in the context of this Communication of the economic impact on the EU of global industrial policies, in particular the US Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

In this context, he considered it important to listen to European industry and European industrial alliances. He gave as an example the dialogues organised by the Commission on a clean transition, which aimed to identify the incentives needed to ensure that European industrial champions continued to invest and prosper in the EU.

He mentioned the comparative development of battery production capacity in the United States and the European Union, or China's growing share of the European market for electric vehicles, which was more open than the US market. However, he recognised that the macroeconomic effects of the IRA on European investment in clean technologies could only be assessed in the longer term, in particular because of the long investment cycles of the clean technology sector.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ felt that the EU should remain very vigilant and, in particular, continue to monitor global and national investment flows, including in relation to other countries' public support policies, in order to prevent these investments from encouraging European companies to consider relocation. He was fundamentally opposed to the kind of protectionism that was being advocated by some third countries. He stressed that the EU was and would remain open to trade, but by ensuring fair competition and a level playing field between stakeholders and not at the price of a race to the bottom.

Finally, he stressed the need for a strong European industrial policy, which required common European funding. He therefore considered this first report to be an essential step towards a better understanding of how the EU could best speed up its transition to climate neutrality while ensuring that its companies remained competitive on the global stage.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ concluded that it would be advisable to take stock of these issues on a regular basis, for example every six months. This would enable the relevant data to be examined, particularly after each clean technology dialogue, and the decisions taken to be adjusted accordingly.

Ms JOUROVÁ pointed out that green and clean technologies were needed globally and that the world had to decarbonise industry in order to halt climate change. She also mentioned the enormous future market that would emerge as a result, and the opportunity for Europe to position itself at the forefront in this field. In this context, the Communication highlighted the tools at the EU's disposal to stimulate investment in clean technologies.

She referred to the EU's establishment of a regulatory and commercial environment conducive to growth and clean technologies which was based on three elements.

She firstly mentioned incentives and predictability, recalling that the EU had developed an ambitious regulatory framework aimed at making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The Commission had also gradually eliminated red tape and reduced the administrative burden, and it had taken steps to simplify and speed up project authorisations.

Secondly, all EU and national funding instruments should be used to unlock the private investments that the EU needed on a large scale to create a necessary leverage effect.

Thirdly, Ms JOUROVÁ referred to regulations that would help European companies deploy clean technologies. These included, in particular, the Regulation establishing a framework of measures to strengthen Europe's net-zero technology products manufacturing ecosystem, and the Regulation establishing a framework to ensure a secure and sustainable supply of critical raw materials. She considered that swift adoption by the co-legislators of the above Regulations, together with the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) and the mid-term review of the Multiannual Financial Framework, would make it possible to address the increased need for EU public investment in critical technologies.

Ms JOUROVÁ felt, however, that the EU could not do things alone, and that it should therefore work together with its international partners to fight climate change and promote clean technologies. She added that the real challenge for European industry was the aggressive support measures taken by some countries.

Lastly, she stressed that Europe was a strong industrial continent and stated that good measures had been adopted at EU level to support European clean technologies. The EU also had the necessary innovation potential and know-how but needed skilled people and sufficient investment to act quickly.

Ms JOUROVÁ concluded by stressing that, although the Communication provided only a preliminary assessment, it was a very good tool to inform the debate with facts and to continue the EU's balanced policy approach to supporting the clean technology industry in Europe.

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

- the importance of properly assessing the impact of the green transition on the different sectors of the economy beyond the effects of the US Inflation Reduction Act;
- a reminder of the potentially negative consequences of the US law, particularly in terms of delocalisation of European companies;
- for some, the observation that the Inflation Reduction Act was at odds with multilateral climate diplomacy as promoted by the EU;
- the importance of properly controlling national State aid which, above a certain volume, created risks for the European internal market;
- the need for joint initiatives and European public funding, in any form, beyond 2026 in the global context of a race for public investment to support the green transition;

- the need to work now on future investment in the sectors concerned to ensure that the European Green Deal remained publicly acceptable, bearing in mind the importance of creating jobs in proportion to those that were disappearing;
- the importance for the EU to act internationally against all forms of unfair competition and to communicate well on this key issue;
- the interest of the EU in using all the assets at its disposal in order to secure the value chain, including in the countries in its immediate neighbourhood which, for example, possessed rare materials.

The PRESIDENT felt that the European Union had indeed shown, in its recent legislative and political initiatives, that it had learned from the past and had listened to the sectors concerned. She mentioned the proposals presented for adoption that day, in particular on wind energy, and the sectoral dialogues on the green transition. She added that national implementation of the legislative framework adopted at European level was a major challenge and that the Commission now had to set out in detail the appropriate guidelines, taking into account this window of opportunity.

The PRESIDENT concluded the item by stressing the success of the Union in its policies, for example in terms of agreements with third countries to secure the supply of rare materials. She highlighted the success of NextGenerationEU, operational until 2026, and the need for the EU to draw inspiration from the US Inflation Reduction Act, for example by ensuring flexibility in the State aid regime and adopting the proposal on the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP). Lastly, she insisted on the need for a significant reduction of the administrative burden in the EU, for example by making use of recent advances in artificial intelligence.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2023) 684/4 for transmission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council and, for information, to 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 – ENHANCING THE EUROPEAN ADMINISTRATIVE SPACE (ComPAct)  
(COM(2023) 667 AND /2; RCC(2023) 175)**

Ms FERREIRA presented to the College the Communication aimed at enhancing the European Administrative Space and highlighted the considerable pressure on the public administrations of the Member States. She underlined the key role of the public sector which contributed, directly or indirectly, to more than 50% of European gross domestic product (GDP) and employed 21% of the EU's workforce. She also mentioned the latest Eurobarometer survey, which showed that almost half of citizens wanted a less bureaucratic, less complex and more responsive administration.

In this context, the proposed initiative sought to unify, under a coherent framework called 'ComPAct', the EU's activities to support Member States' administrations at all levels of governance. This ComPAct framework would thus improve existing forms of cooperation, such as the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN), the Network of Directors of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration (DISPA), as well as exchanges in international fora and between networks of experts. Ms FERREIRA also referred to the support provided to administrations through various European programmes, including the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF) and the Technical Support Instrument (TSI).

She explained that the proposed framework was structured around three pillars, namely: (i) the public administration skills agenda, (ii) the capacity for Europe's Digital Decade, and (iii) the capacity to lead the green transition.

The public administration skills agenda aimed to support Member States in developing resilient and efficient administrations by providing tools to improve and diversify the skills of their staff. She mentioned in particular the Public Administration Cooperation Exchange (PACE), which would facilitate the mobility of civil servants between the

different Member States, both at central and local level. This ‘Erasmus for the civil service’ thus promoted, on a voluntary basis, the sharing of knowledge and good practices between administrations. It followed on from a pilot project which was welcomed with great enthusiasm by the Member States.

Ms FERREIRA also mentioned the development of a ‘basic skills passport’, inspired by national and European skills frameworks, which would help administrations anticipate the long-term development of their workforce and the skills they would need.

The other two pillars related to strengthening the capacity of public administrations for their digital and green transformation. This included supporting administrations in incorporating innovations such as artificial intelligence and developing coherent methodologies for climate risk assessment and prevention.

In conclusion, Ms FERREIRA stressed the need for a robust and efficient public administration to carry out the tasks entrusted to it. She considered it essential to cover the needs of administrations at all levels across the EU, in particular by helping to create a common understanding and sharing of best practices.

A brief discussion followed, during which the Commission focused mainly on the interoperability of IT systems and the existing limitations in terms of skills and equipment in the Member States, as well as the need to effectively reduce the administrative burden on national and European administrations.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT welcomed the existence of an ‘Erasmus for the civil service’ and stressed the exceptional work of the European public administration. She highlighted the relatively small number of Commission staff members, who served the interests of 450 million European citizens and whose tasks were increasing in line with the challenges facing the EU. The unparalleled institutional and administrative knowledge of EU staff was illustrated in particular by the assistance offered to the candidate countries for European accession to reform and strengthen their democratic institutions. Finally, she stressed that reducing the administrative burden for businesses

would also benefit public administrations that had to process data provided by businesses.

Following this presentation, the Commission agreed, on a proposal from the PRESIDENT, that the Communication in COM(2023) 667/2 would be formally adopted by the finalisation written procedure, the deadline for which was set on Wednesday 25 October 2023 (PE/2023/7212).

**10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – EUROPEAN WIND POWER ACTION PLAN  
(COM(2023) 669 TO /3; RCC(2023) 177)**

**11. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – DELIVERING ON THE EU OFFSHORE RENEWABLE ENERGY AMBITIONS  
(COM(2023) 668 TO /3; RCC(2023) 177)**

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ outlined the political and economic background to the wind package, which consisted of a European wind power action plan and a Communication designed to deliver on the EU offshore renewable energy ambition. These initiatives sought to save Europe's wind industry by taking into account the lessons learned from the solar panel sector, where the EU had seen its dominance over international competition fade in the last decade. To avoid these pitfalls, the EU had to shun new strategic dependencies and capitalise on its achievements, in particular by focusing on the European wind sector.

In that regard, the concerted efforts of the Commission, Member States and industry, supported by the right policy and regulatory framework, had enabled the wind sector to

flourish in the EU. Wind power, which was extremely important in decarbonising the European economy, was on track to become the backbone of Europe's energy system.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ then highlighted some key figures that showed the importance of the sector: in 2022, wind energy had accounted for 16% of EU electricity consumption on average, with daily peaks up to 30%. The European wind industry's competitive and integrated ecosystem was based on almost 250 factories along the value chain, in nearly all Member States. The sector was also an important driver of growth and jobs in Europe, with an estimated contribution to EU GDP of EUR 36-42 billion and around 300 000 high-quality jobs created.

He drew attention, however, to the paradox of the European wind industry. On the one hand, with a strong industrial foundation in place and given long-term demand growth, investment had to be accelerated to scale-up the sector. To reach its 2030 targets, the EU needed to more than double its installed wind power capacity. On the other hand, the European wind industry had recently faced operational difficulties. The development of wind parks had slowed, with only 16 GW of capacity installed in 2022, nowhere near the 37 GW/year needed to achieve EU targets.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ referred to a combination of unfavourable circumstances, namely slow permitting procedures, high inflation, raw material and energy costs, an inadequate overview of planned wind deployment projects by Member States, design of national auctions that did not adequately reward high environmental and social standards, and quality and reliability issues. On top of that, there was increasing pressure from international manufacturers seeking to increase their share of the global wind turbine market.

The action plan therefore focused on implementing the robust strategic and regulatory framework already in place in the EU. This included rules on accelerated permitting, design of auctions and defence against unfair subsidies. The package thus provided national authorities and industry with more guidance and assistance in consistently applying this legislative framework in all Member States.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ concluded by stressing the importance of the package beyond the wind sector. Several of the measures proposed were also relevant for other renewable energy sectors, especially the European solar industry. Recognising the challenges of financing projects in these sectors, he highlighted the creation of an energy sovereignty portal. The portal would collate information on the calls for proposals of the various funds managed by the Commission, thus facilitating access to the funding needed to advance renewable energy initiatives.

Ms SIMSON stressed that the action plan tied in well with the clean technologies report presented to the College that day and the State of the Energy Union report, approved by written procedure in parallel.

The annual State of the Energy Union report sent a positive message: REPowerEU was working and Europe was fast-tracking its clean energy transition. However, the fast pace of renewables deployment could only be sustained if the EU strengthened its industrial supply chains. Otherwise, it would face a tough choice between slowing down its renewables transition or increasing its dependence on clean tech imports. The wind power action plan was a first pragmatic way to respond to those risks.

Ms SIMSON pointed out that wind was key to achieving net-zero ambitions and reducing daily electricity costs in Europe. The industry was a truly European supply chain, fairly distributed across almost all Member States. Europe had long been an undisputed global leader in the sector. However, the sector was currently under severe strain. This created vulnerability at a time when international competitors were preparing to enter the European market; hence the importance of the action plan designed to defend this strategic sector.

She explained that the plan proposed action across six different areas. First, the aim was to speed up project deployment by simplifying permitting procedures and giving industry more visibility on future projects and auction schedules. In this respect, the Commission would promote the digitalisation of permitting procedures and the

exchange of best practices, and would provide national administrations with training material and technical assistance.

Second, the design of auctions, which had caused many problems, would be improved. To that end, the Commission would encourage Member States to establish pre-qualification criteria for auctions, incorporating compliance with labour and environmental standards as well as with cybersecurity requirements. The Commission would also harmonise the use of non-price criteria in auctions. Inter-institutional negotiations on the proposed Net-Zero Industry Act (NZIA) could be used to introduce these elements into legislation.

Third, Ms SIMSON stressed the importance of presenting a credible financing offer for the sector. In this regard, the Commission welcomed the fact that the EIB had agreed to set up, within six months, a dedicated counter-guarantee instrument to help suppliers obtain loans more easily. The Commission was also proposing a doubling of the next Innovation Fund call for clean technology manufacturing projects and preferential access for wind projects to the projects development assistance facility.

Fourth, the idea was to address the skills gap through net-zero academies established under the NZIA.

Fifth, trade issues and the level playing field would be examined, by carefully monitoring the market and assessing allegations of unfair practices. The Commission would also help project the European wind industry internationally through its energy dialogues and Global Gateway outreach.

Finally, the creation of a European Wind Charter was proposed, bringing together the Commission, Member States and stakeholders around measures to strengthen the competitiveness of the European wind industry.

Ms SIMSON pointed out that most of the measures included in the plan were valid for onshore and offshore wind. A dedicated document on the offshore sector accompanied

the action plan, but many of the planned actions would also be useful and necessary for all renewable technologies.

In conclusion, Ms SIMSON noted that in the coming years wind energy was set to grow steadily in Europe and globally. The EU could not afford to leave this opportunity to others; hence the Commission's decision to be proactive in addressing the sector's concerns.

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

- the importance of measuring the impact of accelerated permitting procedures on renewables deployment;
- the EU's increased needs in terms of wind and solar parks, and the importance in this context of promoting constructive discussion within local communities.

The PRESIDENT concluded by thanking the Commissioners and the departments concerned for their work. She pointed out that the sovereignty portal was part of the Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP), which allowed applicants to apply for various funds in one go, based on the one-stop-shop principle.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communications in COM(2023) 669/3 and COM(2023) 668/3, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and, for information, to the national parliaments.

## **12. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – ADDRESSING MEDICINE SHORTAGES IN THE EU (COM(2023) 672 AND /2; RCC(2023) 176)**

The PRESIDENT asked Mr SCHINAS and Ms KYRIAKIDES to present the Communication on preventing and remedying shortages of medicines in the EU.

Mr SCHINAS began by mentioning the origins of this initiative, highlighting the request made by the EU leaders at the European Council in June 2023 and at their informal meeting in Granada (Spain) in October 2023.

He went on to highlight the role of the pharmaceutical sector as a key pillar of European industry and as a major contributor to the EU economy; in 2021, pharmaceutical exports had generated a trade surplus of EUR 235 billion. The EU pharmaceutical sector was the second-largest in the world, employing almost 800 000 people, and a leading investor in research and development.

The main focus of the Commission's efforts in this sector, within the framework of the European Health Union, had been to reform EU pharmaceutical legislation, which was now over 20 years old. The Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) had been established primarily to support the pharmaceutical sector.

However, Mr SCHINAS underlined the immediate need to address shortages in the period preceding the effective implementation of the new legislative framework. With this in mind, the proposed Communication aimed to establish robust transitional measures, structured around three main strands to ensure the continuity of supply of medicines and maintain a resilient EU pharmaceutical sector.

The first strand addressed the short term and aimed to ensure that no shortages of vital antibiotics or basic medicines occurred this coming winter. To this end, the proposal involved a voluntary mechanism for sharing medicines and rationalising purchases, and the creation of a list of essential medicines.

The second strand had a medium-term focus, with the intention of forging critical alliances within the pharmaceutical sector, bringing together various relevant stakeholders.

The third and final strand addressed longer-term international cooperation, highlighting the need for collaboration within the complex global network covering research and the production of medicines.

Ms KYRIAKIDES explained in turn that, while it was understood that the issue of access to medicines could not be resolved overnight, an urgent operational response was nevertheless needed to address shortages of medicines in the EU.

The Communication, building on work already under way, was proposing a collective approach at EU level to improve the availability of medicines for Europeans, with a view to minimising the difficulties this coming winter and in subsequent winters. This would be done in close cooperation with the European Medicines Agency (EMA), as well as with Member States and the pharmaceutical companies, to increase the production of critical medicines.

In the short term, a new voluntary solidarity mechanism was proposed for next winter. In practice, this mechanism would allow any Member State facing shortages to seek support from other Member States who might be able to share medicines if they had sufficient supplies. In addition, regulatory flexibilities, similar to those adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic, would be used to allow medicines to reach patients quicker.

Ms KYRIAKIDES added that guidance on the procurement of medicines would be sent to Member States in early 2024, emphasising that security-of-supply criteria should be included in procurement decisions. In collaboration with Member States, coordinated efforts would be made to anticipate the pharmaceutical reform. This would include, for example, earlier notification of shortages by pharmaceutical companies and the development of shortage prevention plans for all medicines through early-warning systems.

Similarly, speeding up work on the EU critical medicines list was aimed at presenting before the end of the year an initial and scalable list of around 150 to 300 critical medicines that were not easy to replace. Discussions had also started with interested

Member States on the joint purchase at EU level of antibiotics and medicines against respiratory viruses.

Ms KYRIAKIDES ended by referring to the establishment of a critical medicines alliance, scheduled for early 2024, consisting of a new public-private partnership with all relevant stakeholders. The alliance would focus on the most critical medicines on the EU list, providing tailored responses to supply-chain vulnerabilities through public procurement and the coordination of stocks of medicines at EU level.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2023) 672/2 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.

### **13. OTHER BUSINESS**

#### ***LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS***

The PRESIDENT referred to the recent EU-US Summit which had taken place in Washington DC on 20 October. She emphasised that both administrations were on the same page with regard to the main topics discussed at the meeting, namely the crisis in the Middle East and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Turning to the situation in the Middle East, she stressed the need to recognise the plight of Israelis in the face of the terrorist attack by Hamas. Reaffirming Israel's right to defend itself, in accordance with humanitarian and international law, she said that there was no contradiction between the expression of unwavering solidarity with Israel and the EU's humanitarian commitment to help the Palestinian people. Referring to her recent conversation with the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mr Mahmoud ABBAS, she pointed out that Hamas did not represent the Palestinian people, and that the aim was to ensure that international humanitarian aid reached Gaza.

The PRESIDENT then referred to the regional implications of the current crisis, stressing the need to avoid escalation and the spread of the conflict. She reasserted her commitment to a two-state solution, which she regarded as the way forward in the absence of a better alternative.

Lastly, she welcomed the joint financing package for Ukraine and Israel proposed by the United States. As for Ukraine, she stressed that it was important to ensure the swift adoption by the co-legislators of the dedicated facility to support Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction and modernisation, which had a budget of EUR 50 billion.

Mr BORRELL then reported to the College on the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council held on 23 October. The Ministers had discussed the situation in the Middle East, taking as a basis the outcome of the informal videoconference of Foreign Affairs Ministers held on 10 October and the videoconference of the members of the European Council on 17 October.

He began by highlighting the common positions reiterated by Ministers, namely the firm condemnation of the Hamas terrorist attack, the call for the immediate release of hostages, and Israel's right to defend itself in accordance with humanitarian and international law. He pointed out that in addition there should be no cutting of essential services to the civilian population, such as water and electricity supplies.

Mr BORRELL then underlined the urgent need to address the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza, in particular by ensuring humanitarian access to deliver aid to those in need. While the arrival of the first few humanitarian convoys was encouraging, the aid to Palestinian civilians needed to flow faster and in bigger volumes. In addition, he echoed the call by UN Secretary General António GUTERRES for increased EU financial support for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Lastly, he stressed the need to avoid a regional escalation of the conflict, in particular by strengthening the EU's strategic communication to counter disinformation. He also

reported on the EU's participation in the Cairo Summit to discuss the measures to be taken with the key stakeholders.

Mr BORRELL concluded by saying that the ultimate objective was to achieve a just and lasting peace involving a two-state solution. In this connection, the Ministers had underlined the need to restore a political horizon, with intensified EU engagement, building on previous attempts to re-energise the peace process in the region.

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

- assertion of the College's total solidarity with Israeli citizens and unequivocal condemnation of the horror inflicted on the civilian population by Hamas;
- the asymmetric nature of a conflict between a democracy, on the one hand, and a terrorist organisation, on the other, and a reminder that Hamas bore full responsibility for triggering the crisis;
- the obligations under international humanitarian law that applied to all the participants in the conflict, both States and non-governmental bodies;
- the vital importance of the humanitarian assistance provided to the Palestinian population by the EU and its Member States which, however, depended on access to the Gaza Strip for the humanitarian convoys;
- the fact that the volume of humanitarian supplies was far too low to meet needs, and a reminder of the ban on supplying essential goods such as fuel, which was crucial to supply water, distribute food and run hospitals;
- the need to take into account the fact that dual-use goods such as fuel, while essential to meet humanitarian needs, could also be used for military purposes;
- the need to extend humanitarian assistance to northern Gaza given the lack of capacity for people in the south and the bombing of the entire territory;

- the unique expertise, capacity and experience of UNRWA in the Gaza Strip; given its crucial importance, it should be reinforced with additional financial support from the EU;
- the comment that the EU’s continued financial commitment to UNRWA was reflected in an ongoing multiannual contract with regular upward financial adjustments, and the call, therefore, for greater financial participation by other international stakeholders;
- the range of different and nuanced views on the situation by Member States and their citizens, hence the importance of a united front and coherent communication by the Commission;
- the symbolic significance of the Cairo Peace Summit, which had been held at a critical moment, and the noteworthy presence of a high-level ‘Team Europe’; regret, however, that it had proved impossible to agree on conclusions in a joint statement;
- appreciation of Egypt’s stabilising role in the conflict, which should be encouraged and strengthened, and of the moderation shown by several Heads of Delegations from Arab countries;
- in particular, Saudi Arabia’s efforts to maintain a balanced position on the Middle East conflict and the willingness of the Saudi authorities to cooperate with the EU;
- the long-term outlook for the region, in particular as regards the reconstruction phase, irrespective of the current uncertainties as to developments in the situation;
- the need, in this context, to make the European budget more flexible to permit a rapid response to future needs;
- the increase in the threat level in the European Union, the increased risk of anti-Semitic attacks, and the rise of Islamophobia;

- the significant improvement, however, in the EU's readiness to deal with a terrorist threat, illustrated by the establishment of a robust counter-terrorism agenda and the appointment of an EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator, all of which demonstrated enhanced capacity to manage such risks;
- the crucial importance of the exchange of information between Member States, and the fact that some Member States had closed their borders, which was regarded as counterproductive given the presence of radicalised individuals within each Member State;
- the role of the Regulation on addressing the dissemination of terrorist content online, and appreciation of the cooperation by large companies in the sector, in particular in the context of the EU Internet Forum, in addressing growing disinformation on social media.

The PRESIDENT ended the discussion by stressing that the EU budget had been drawn up before the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore did not take into account the needs arising from the crises linked to the pandemic, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and Hamas' attack on Israel.

With regard to the situation in the Middle East, she referred to the EU's historic responsibility and the persistent trauma, highlighting the complexity of the issues at stake and the recurrence of crises there. Speaking on behalf of the Palestinian population, the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud ABBAS, had clearly condemned Hamas for its terrorist acts. She considered that visits to Israel by several Heads of State or Government had had a positive impact on developments on the ground. Finally, she underlined the broader implications of the crisis and the risks of the conflict spreading.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 11.00.