



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2024) 2481 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 5 March 2024

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2481st meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 6 February 2024

(afternoon)

PV(2024) 2481 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

EN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance list	5-6
1. AGENDAS (OJ(2024) 2481/FINAL; SEC(2024) 2481/FINAL)	7
2. WEEKLY MEETING OF HEADS OF CABINET (RCC(2024) 2481).....	7
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES	7
4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2024) 61)	7
5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2024) 7).....	13
6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS.....	13
6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2024) 40 ET SEQ.).....	13
6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2024) 41 ET SEQ.)	14
6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2024) 42 ET SEQ.)	14
6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2024) 43 AND /2)	14
7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2024) 44/2).....	14
7.1. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A COMMISSION REPRESENTATION AT GRADE AD14/15 (PERS(2023) 43 TO /4).....	14
7.2. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A COMMISSION REPRESENTATION AT GRADE AD14/15 (PERS(2023) 44 TO /4).....	15
7.3. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A COMMISSION REPRESENTATION AT GRADE AD14/15 (PERS(2023) 46 TO /4).....	16
7.4. DG COMMUNICATION – CLOSURE OF A SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A COMMISSION REPRESENTATION AT GRADE AD14/15, AND INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL RE- PUBLICATION (GRADE AD14/15) AND EXTERNAL RE-PUBLICATION	

(GRADE AD14) OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR A POST OF HEAD OF A COMMISSION REPRESENTATION (PERS(2023) 45; PERS(2024) 15).....	16
7.5. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – ADDENDUM TO THE LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL (ECDC), AT GRADE AD14	17
7.6. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF TWO HEADS OF EUROPEAN COMMISSION REGIONAL REPRESENTATIONS.....	17
8. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON COMBATING THE SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL AND REPLACING COUNCIL FRAMEWORK DECISION 2004/68/JHA (RECAST) (COM(2024) 60 AND /2; SWD(2024) 32; SWD(2024) 33; SWD(2024) 34; SEC(2024) 57; RCC(2024) 65).....	18
9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – TOWARDS AN AMBITIOUS INDUSTRIAL CARBON MANAGEMENT FOR THE EU (COM(2024) 62 TO /3; RCC(2024) 66)	21
10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – SECURING OUR FUTURE – EUROPE’S 2040 CLIMATE TARGET AND PATH TO CLIMATE NEUTRALITY BY 2050 BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE, JUST AND PROSPEROUS SOCIETY (COM(2024) 63 TO /3; SWD(2024) 63; SWD(2024) 64; SEC(2024) 64; RCC(2024) 66).....	21
11. OTHER BUSINESS.....	29
11.1. SPECIAL MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL (1 FEBRUARY 2024).....	29

11.2. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION, PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'EUROPEAN CANNABIS INITIATIVE' (C(2024) 821)	30
--	----

Single sitting: Tuesday 6 February 2024 (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	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Executive Vice-President	Items 8 (in part) to 11
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr BRETON	Member	Items 1 to 9/10 (in part)
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	Items 1 to 9/10 (in part)
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	Items 8 (in part) to 11 (in part)
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	Items 1 to 9/10 (in part)
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	
Ms IVANOVA	Member	
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member	

Absent:

Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President
Mr HAHN	Member
Mr SCHMIT	Member
Mr GENTILONI	Member

Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member
Ms FERREIRA	Member
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member
Ms DALLI	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member

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

Ms LOTSON LÓPEZ	Policy coordinator in Mr BORRELL's cabinet	
Mr NOACK	A member of Mr HAHN's cabinet	
Mr PIANTINI	Expert in Mr GENTILONI's cabinet	
Mr OCHMANSKI	Head of Cabinet to Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	
Mr ROSSIDES	Head of Cabinet to Ms KYRIAKIDES	
Mr VELLA	Head of Cabinet to Ms DALLI	
Ms WEBBER	Head of Cabinet to Ms JOHANSSON	Items 9/10 (in part) and 11
Mr SAVIGNAT	A member of Ms URPILAINEN's cabinet	

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service
Ms SPINANT	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 VAN KEMSEKE	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(2024) 2481/FINAL; SEC(2024) 2481/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(2024) 2481)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 5 February 2024.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2478th, 2479th and 2480th meetings of 10, 24 and 31 January 2024 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2024) 61)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 2 February 2024 (RCC(2024) 61).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Pact on Migration and Asylum: common procedure for international protection in the Union and repeal of Directive 2013/32/EU (Regulation) – KELLER report – 2016/0224 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 59.

- **Pact on Migration and Asylum: asylum and migration management and amendment of Council Directive 2003/109/EC and the proposed Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Asylum and Migration Fund] (Regulation) – TOBÉ report – 2020/0279 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 60.

- **Pact on Migration and Asylum: addressing situations of crisis and *force majeure* in the field of migration and asylum (Regulation) – LÓPEZ AGUILAR report – 2020/0277 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 61.

- **Pact on Migration and Asylum:**
 - **Introduction of a screening of third-country nationals at the external borders and amendment of Regulations (EC) No 767/2008, (EU) 2017/2226, (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/817 (Regulation) – SIPPEL report – 2020/0278 (COD)**
 - **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/816 establishing a centralised system for the identification of Member States holding conviction information on third-country nationals and stateless persons (ECRIS-TCN) to supplement the European Criminal Records Information System and Regulation (EU) 2019/818 on establishing a framework for interoperability between EU information systems in the field of police and judicial cooperation, asylum and migration and amending Regulations (EU) 2018/1726, (EU) 2018/1862 and (EU) 2019/816 for the purpose of introducing a screening of third-country nationals at the external border (Regulation) – SIPPEL report – 2021/0046 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 62.

- **Pact on Migration and Asylum: establishment of ‘Eurodac’ for the comparison of biometric data for the effective application of Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Regulation on Asylum and Migration Management] and of Regulation (EU) XXX/XXX [Resettlement Regulation], for identifying an illegally staying third-country national or stateless person and on requests for the comparison with Eurodac data by Member States’ law enforcement authorities and Europol for law enforcement purposes and amendment of Regulations (EU) 2018/1240 and (EU) 2019/818 (Regulation) – BUXADÉ VILLALBA report – 2016/0132 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 63.

- **Amendment of Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims (Directive) – BJÖRK & RODRÍGUEZ PALOP report – 2022/0426 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 65.

- **Import, export and transit measures for firearms, their essential components and ammunition, implementing Article 10 of the United Nations’ Protocol against the illicit manufacturing of and trafficking in firearms, their parts and components and ammunition, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UN Firearms Protocol) (Regulation – recast) – LANGE report – 2022/0288 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 35.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2016/399 on a Union Code on the rules governing the movement of persons across borders (Regulation) – GUILLAUME report – 2021/0428 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 54.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2019/1242 as regards strengthening the CO₂ 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(2024) 44.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 2019/1009 as regards the digital labelling of EU fertilising products (Regulation) – GRAPINI report – 2023/0049 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 68.

- **Establishment of a framework of measures for strengthening Europe’s net-zero technology products manufacturing ecosystem (Net Zero Industry Act) (Regulation) – EHLER report – 2023/0081 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 69/2.

- **Transfer of proceedings in criminal matters (Regulation) – KANKO report – 2023/0093 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 57.

- **Combating violence against women and domestic violence (Directive) – FITZGERALD report – 2022/0066 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 58.

- **Urban wastewater treatment (Directive - recast) – TORVALDS report – 2022/0345 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 72.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2017/852 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 May 2017 on mercury as regards dental amalgam and**

other mercury-added products subject to manufacturing, import and export restrictions (Regulation) – MORTLER report – 2023/0272 (COD)

Line set out in SI(2024) 70/2.

- **Amendment of Regulations (EU) No 648/2012, (EU) No 575/2013 and (EU) 2017/1131 as regards measures to mitigate excessive exposures to third-country central counterparties and improve the efficiency of Union clearing markets (Regulation) – HÜBNER report – 2022/0403 (COD)**
- **Amendment of Directives 2009/65/EU, 2013/36/EU and (EU) 2019/2034 as regards the treatment of concentration risk towards central counterparties and the counterparty risk on centrally cleared derivative transactions (Directive) – HÜBNER report – 2022/0404 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 64/3.

- **Amendment of Directive 2013/34/EU as regards the time limits for the adoption of sustainability reporting standards for certain sectors and for certain third-country undertakings (Decision) – VOSS report – 2023/0368 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 79.

- **Transparency and integrity of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) rating activities (Regulation) – LALUCQ report - 2023/0177 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 80.

- **Amendment of Directive (EU) 2015/413 facilitating cross-border exchange of information on road-safety-related traffic offences (Directive) – ZŁOTOWSKI report – 2023/0052 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 66/2.

- **Establishment of the Ukraine Facility (Regulation) – GAHLER & GARDIAZABAL RUBIAL report – 2023/0200 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 67.

- **Establishment of the European Disability Card and the European Parking Card for persons with disabilities (Directive) – ĎURIŠ NICHOLSONOVÁ report – 2023/0311 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 73.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 691/2011 as regards introducing new environmental economic accounts modules (Regulation) – CANFIN report – 2022/0210 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 75.

- **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(2024) 78.

- **Oral question O-000002/2024 – Working conditions of teachers in the EU**

Line set out in SP(2024) 44.

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

- **Commission replies to the legislative resolutions (and list of non-legislative resolutions without formal reply) adopted by the European Parliament at its December 2023 part-session**

Line set out in SP(2024) 56.

- **Commission replies to the non-legislative resolutions adopted by the European Parliament at its November II 2023 part-session**

Line set out in SP(2024) 58/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques and their food and feed, and amendment of Regulation (EU) 2017/625 (Regulation) – POLFJÄRD report – 2023/0226 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2024) 35.

- **Amendment of Council Decision 2009/917/JHA, as regards its alignment with Union rules on the protection of personal data (Regulation) – ERNST report – 2023/0143 (COD)**

Compromise text in SP(2024) 38, further to note SI(2023) 553 already approved by the Commission on 19 December 2023 by written procedure.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2024) 7)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2024) 7 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 31 January 2024.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2024) 40 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 29 January and 4 February 2024.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2024) 41 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 29 January and 4 February 2024.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2024) 42 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 29 January and 4 February 2024 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2024) 43 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 5 and 9 February 2024, and of the finalisation written procedure.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2024) 44/2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2024) 13/2)

**7.1. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A
COMMISSION REPRESENTATION AT GRADE AD14/15**
(PERS(2023) 43 TO /4)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Head of the European Commission Representation in Berlin, Germany (DG Communication) (PERS(2023) 43 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 19 and 20 July 2023 (PERS(2023) 43/3 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 Barbara GESSLER to the post.

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

7.2. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A COMMISSION REPRESENTATION AT GRADE AD14/15 (PERS(2023) 44 TO /4)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Head of the European Commission Representation in Budapest, Hungary (DG Communication) (PERS(2023) 44 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 19 and 20 July 2023 (PERS(2023) 44/3 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 Mr Gabor ZUPKO to the post.

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

7.3. DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A COMMISSION REPRESENTATION AT GRADE AD14/15 (PERS(2023) 46 TO /4)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Head of the European Commission Representation in Sofia, Bulgaria (DG Communication) (PERS(2023) 46 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 4 and 7 December 2023 (PERS(2023) 46/3 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 Yordanka CHOBANOVA to the post.

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

7.4. DG COMMUNICATION – CLOSURE OF A SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR THE APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A COMMISSION REPRESENTATION AT GRADE AD14/15, AND INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL RE-PUBLICATION (GRADE AD14/15) AND EXTERNAL RE-PUBLICATION (GRADE AD14) OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR A POST OF HEAD OF A COMMISSION REPRESENTATION (PERS(2023) 45; PERS(2024) 15)

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided:

- to close, with immediate effect, the selection procedure for the appointment of the Head of the European Commission Representation in Warsaw, Poland (DG Communication), without making any appointment;

- to authorise the internal and interinstitutional re-publication at grade AD14/15 and the external re-publication at grade AD14, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations, of a vacancy notice in PERS(2024) 15 for the post of Head of the European Commission Representation in Warsaw, Poland.

This decision would take effect immediately.

7.5. *DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – ADDENDUM TO THE LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR DISEASE PREVENTION AND CONTROL (ECDC), AT GRADE AD14*

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

- to approve the addendum, consisting of two candidates, to the list drawn up for the post of Director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control in Stockholm;
- to ask the Member of the Commission responsible, Ms KYRIAKIDES, to communicate this decision to the Management Board of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.6. *DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF TWO HEADS OF EUROPEAN COMMISSION REGIONAL REPRESENTATIONS*

The Commission took note of the decision of the Appointing Authority to appoint:

- Mr Stefan LOCK as Head of the European Commission Regional Representation in Bonn, Germany;

- Mr Wolfgang BUECHERL as Head of the European Commission Regional Representation in Munich, Germany.

These decisions would take effect on a date to be determined.

**8. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON COMBATING THE SEXUAL ABUSE AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN AND CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL AND REPLACING COUNCIL FRAMEWORK DECISION 2004/68/JHA (RECAST)
(COM(2024) 60 AND /2; SWD(2024) 32; SWD(2024) 33; SWD(2024) 34; SEC(2024) 57; RCC(2024) 65)**

Ms ŠUICA outlined for the College the proposal for a Directive to update the criminal-law rules on the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

Today around one in five children was a victim of sexual violence in one form or another, online or offline, and this figure was unfortunately on the rise. By way of example, in 2020, 1 million cases of child sexual abuse had been reported by online service providers, as against 1.5 million in 2022 in the EU.

Such sexual abuse perpetrated on the most vulnerable victims, children, was particularly heinous and frequently occurred within their closest circle. 75% of victims knew their abusers and suffered from life-long trauma.

The current digital age and new technologies had unfortunately had the effect of increasing threats and abuse. This was why protecting children from all forms of violence remained a key objective of the EU's comprehensive strategy on the rights of the child.

As part of the review of the 2011 Directive on combating the abuse and exploitation of children, the Commission proposed to close the gaps in the current legislation, to

improve the criminal-law response to crimes committed against children and to address new threats, in particular those arising in the digital age. The update to the criminal-law rules was thus intended to give new impetus to the fight against child sexual abuse and to ensure that such crimes could be effectively prevented, prosecuted and combated. The aim was also to ensure justice for the child victims of abuse and to provide them with protection and appropriate long-term support in the light of the trauma suffered. The key updates also included an obligation for Member States to ensure improved access to justice and protection systems that were better suited to children.

Further, in March 2024, the Commission would present a Recommendation on integrated child protection systems, reinforcing measures to protect children against all forms of violence, including online abuse.

Lastly, Ms ŠUIČA called for awareness-raising at all levels of society, including among children and young people, parents and caregivers, teachers and educators, and policymakers, so that all could work together on eradicating child sexual abuse both online and offline. Member States were therefore asked to invest in awareness-raising, especially on online risks, to ensure that the internet was safer for children and young people, as recommended in the Better Internet for Kids strategy (BIK+) adopted by the Commission in May 2022.

Mr SCHINAS highlighted the main objectives of the proposal for a Directive, which were (i) to extend the definitions of criminal offences related to child sexual abuse in all Member States in order to make it easier to prosecute perpetrators, (ii) to strengthen investigative methods for this type of crime, (iii) to provide more appropriate support to young victims, and (iv) to reinforce prevention measures.

Ms JOHANSSON stressed the particularly heinous nature of crimes and sexual abuse committed against children. The EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse had been adopted by the Commission in July 2020, at the beginning of its term of office. The proposal for a Directive being presented that day

was one of the last steps in implementing that strategy and adapted current legislation to the age of the internet and artificial intelligence.

She gave the example of direct dissemination of child sexual abuse online and the possession and sharing of online of paedophile handbooks, which from now on would be covered by the scope of the Directive and regarded as criminal offences.

The proposal for a Directive also strengthened prosecution and victim support by extending the period during which victims could report sexual abuse and take legal action against the perpetrator. It also established a right to financial compensation for life-long trauma caused by sexual abuse suffered as a child.

The youngest victims were often those subjected to the most brutal forms of violence and abuse of very young children had increased significantly in the EU. Particular focus should therefore be on this group of the most vulnerable children.

Ms JOHANSSON stressed the extent of sexual abuse and violence against children, with one girl in five and one boy in ten victims of such violence in the EU. She called for all the commitments under the EU strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse to be implemented as quickly as possible.

The PRESIDENT closed the discussion by saying that the Commission's wish had been to protect the most vulnerable and that the proposals adopted during its term of office had allowed significant progress to be made in protecting children from sexual abuse. She called on the College to continue resolutely implementing the EU strategy for a more effective fight against these heinous crimes.

Following these presentations, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Directive in COM(2024) 60/2, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments, together with the staff working document, the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2024) 32, SWD(2024) 33, SWD(2024) 34 and SEC(2024) 57, the contents

of which were noted.

9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – TOWARDS AN AMBITIOUS INDUSTRIAL CARBON MANAGEMENT FOR THE EU

(COM(2024) 62 TO /3; RCC(2024) 66)

10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – SECURING OUR FUTURE – EUROPE’S 2040 CLIMATE TARGET AND PATH TO CLIMATE NEUTRALITY BY 2050 BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE, JUST AND PROSPEROUS SOCIETY

(COM(2024) 63 TO /3; SWD(2024) 63; SWD(2024) 64; SEC(2024) 64; RCC(2024) 66)

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ highlighted the EU’s ambitious climate target for 2040 of reducing net emissions by 90%. This target was based on a very comprehensive impact assessment and sound scientific evidence, and was an essential stepping stone towards achieving the ultimate objective of being climate neutral by 2050.

In that connection, he stressed that the green transition involved more than simply cutting emissions; the competitiveness of European industry also needed to be safeguarded by encouraging innovation in clean technology and attracting private investment. The transition would also lead to new business opportunities and create high-quality jobs, though it needed to be fair to ensure that no-one was left behind; this required targeted support and reskilling initiatives for workers. Lastly, he felt that a level playing field needed to be in place with international partners in order to

achieve this objective, taking advantage of trade policies and collaborative partnerships.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ then set out several of the enabling conditions that were essential for achieving the 2040 target.

First, it was vitally important to ensure full implementation of the climate and energy legislation that had already been adopted for 2030 in order to lay the groundwork for the ambitious 2040 target.

Second, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ called for due consideration to be given to the potential social and economic implications, in order to ensure that the transition was fair and that it prioritised upskilling and reskilling of the workforce, support for vulnerable regions and sectors and targeted income support measures.

Third, he hoped that the European Green Deal would become an ‘industry decarbonisation deal’, enabling European industry to be at the forefront of clean technology thanks to innovative financial instruments, targeted grants and readily available raw materials.

Fourth, noting that global competition was intensifying, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ referred to the need for joint initiatives such as strategic procurement and fair trade policies that could reward early movers in clean technologies.

Fifth, he stressed the importance of having an open dialogue with citizens, businesses and other stakeholders, expressing his view that initiatives such as the clean transition dialogues and the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture were good examples of this commitment to inclusive decision-making when shaping the post-2030 framework.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ concluded his presentation by stressing that this Communication on the 2040 climate target did not propose new legislation or policies, but rather marked the start of a dialogue with all stakeholders. The outcome of these talks should allow the next Commission to propose the requisite changes to the legislative

framework in order to achieve the 2040 target in a way that was fair. The changes proposed should also guarantee a decarbonised and prosperous future as well as decent and fair wages for all parties concerned, including farmers, as part of sustainable production processes.

Mr HOEKSTRA echoed Mr ŠEFČOVIČ's point that the Communication on the 2040 climate target was by no means a legally binding proposal, but rather a starting point for a more in-depth discussion on the EU's climate ambitions.

As regards the timetable for presenting this Communication, the Commission was legally obliged to table an initiative six months after the COP28 global stocktake. Moreover, he had already spoken to MEPs about the Communication, as it was also a response to requests they had made.

Mr HOEKSTRA further noted that there was increasing global acknowledgement of the need to step up climate action, although the high cost of the transition was often put forward as a reason not to do so. With that in mind, he stressed the importance of combining the EU's climate ambitions with policies that supported competitiveness, a fair transition and a level playing field. The aim for the next Commission would be to formulate concrete measures that were in line with the needs expressed by all stakeholders.

For her part, Ms SIMSON said that achieving the interim target of a 90% reduction in carbon emissions was within reach for the energy sector, and that it was a feasible and cost-effective projection. In the energy sector, businesses were already looking ahead to 2040 when drawing up their strategic plans. However, the industry was questioning whether demand for hydrogen would be sufficient over the next decade to justify making investments at the current time and whether there would be a transport network for CO₂ emissions together with corresponding investments in carbon capture.

She considered it essential to have an appropriate legal framework in place to ensure predictability and stability, as the Commission had done with its framework

covering the period until 2030. For the framework to be effective, the sector now needed long-term certainty, which was why the Commission was not proposing changes to the 2030 framework, as it was an appropriate stepping stone to 2040.

In the field of energy, a 90% reduction target meant that a large part of the energy system would need to be decarbonised. This would be made possible by ensuring a faster roll-out of renewables and gradually phasing out fossil fuels.

As a result, renewables should account for 75% of final energy consumption in 2040, compared with around 42% in 2030. The use of fossil fuels was set to continue to decline and, by 2040, should account for only 15% of final energy consumption, mainly in non-energy sectors. Electrification would be the main driver of this process, and the share of electricity in energy consumption was set to rise from 25% today to 50% in 2040. This shift would be driven mainly by the development of solar energy, wind power and hydropower, but also by low-carbon technologies.

Ms SIMSON pointed out that a 90% reduction pathway also generated clear benefits compared with other slower and more costly options, such as the use of e-fuels or carbon capture. She noted that, in the recent past, renewables had seen a similar expansion and costs had fallen, for example in the solar and wind power sectors. These sectors had reduced their costs and become competitive in less than a decade, gradually allowing industry to have improved access to affordable clean tech and to modernise faster. Although faster decarbonisation entailed higher upfront costs, it also brought down the price of electricity more quickly for industry and households, which was key to competitiveness in the medium term.

In her view, a 90% reduction target would also give the EU greater energy sovereignty. As things stood, the EU imported 61% of its energy, mainly in the form of fossil fuels; by 2040, this figure would fall to 26%, which could generate around EUR 2.8 billion in savings by 2050. The EU would also be better able to withstand

shocks and it would be much harder for energy supply to be used as a means of exerting pressure on the EU.

Ms SIMSON stressed that the study and impact assessment made clear that the target level was ambitious and the conditions needed to achieve it even more so. In certain areas, extra efforts and stronger policies would be needed to achieve such a high level of decarbonisation.

In this context, the EU had to think big about its energy infrastructure. Over the next ten years, the entire EU infrastructure map would have to be redrawn to accommodate flexible electricity super grids that could be adapted to decentralised production, intermittent renewables and digitalisation. The gas network would also have to be repurposed to transport hydrogen or CO₂.

Ms SIMSON then drew attention to the financing requirements: between 2030 and 2040, EUR 670 billion a year would have to be invested in the energy sector, and better incentives would have to be provided to promote the clean transition in industry, the transport sector and households. A deeper single market, better instruments and a mix of public and private financing would be needed to do this. She admitted that, while the figure was high, in comparison, the EU had spent EUR 380 billion on subsidies in 2022 to counter rising prices and EUR 640 billion on purchasing fossil fuels.

When it came to technology, pragmatism was of the essence, since a 90% reduction meant deploying a broad portfolio of technologies. For example, carbon management and capture could help reduce emissions where there was no alternative. In this connection, removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere was essential for achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

On this last point, Ms SIMSON added that, although the technology was available, the EU did not yet have an appropriate regulatory or policy framework in place, or a business case. It was for this reason that she was presenting an industrial carbon management strategy that day, offering a comprehensive framework of actions

needed to set up a single market for CO₂. She thus noted the different stages of carbon management identified in the strategy, from transport to storage via usage and removal. It would be for the next Commission to address the regulatory implications.

In conclusion, she stated that, in the coming days, she would launch the first stage of an industrial alliance on small modular reactors. The aim was to facilitate the deployment of the first reactors by 2030 in countries that wished to do so, in full respect of the highest standards of nuclear safety and environmental sustainability.

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

- the College’s general support for the two Communications;
- the consensus on the importance of combatting climate change and reducing emissions;
- at the same time, certain concerns regarding the timetable and financial implications set out in the Communications;
- the belief nevertheless that it was vital to address emissions reduction immediately and to establish the conditions needed to achieve the 2050 targets on a sound basis;
- as regards the aim and effectiveness of the proposed measures, the need to consider the significant additional economic costs that would have to be incurred;
- at the same time, recognition of the fact that strategic climate objectives fostered prosperity and created certainty for investors, and of the need to always take account of the much higher cost of inaction;

- the importance of promoting public and private financing through supporting cross-sector horizontal measures to ensure a level playing field;
- the need to ensure that the introduction of stricter measures did not undermine the competitiveness of European companies compared with the rest of the world;
- trust nevertheless in the fact that the transition should strengthen the competitiveness of European industry by encouraging innovation and scientific progress in clean technologies;
- a call for greater dialogue and for full consideration of the potential impact on the competitiveness of specific sectors, such as agriculture and transport;
- the importance of striking the right balance between the aim of reducing emissions and the needs of the agriculture sector, which was a crucial economic partner in reducing emissions;
- the opportunity to actively promote the adoption of emission-reduction measures in the transport sector, especially the Single European Sky initiative, and the production of alternative fuels for aviation;
- the need for transparent and inclusive dialogue with all stakeholders before proposing a legislative framework;
- the value of taking into account the contribution of carbon-free transitional energy sources, such as nuclear, to achieve the EU's climate objectives.

In response to certain points raised during the discussion, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ emphasised that the aim of the two proposed Communications was precisely that of setting out – in conjunction with stakeholders – the next stages of the EU's clean transition.

He also welcomed the fact that the impact assessments included a thorough competitiveness analysis, because the EU would not achieve its goal of climate neutrality within the established time frame if competitiveness aspects were not duly taken into account.

He also pointed out that the costs of not taking action against climate change would be extremely high and emphasised the importance of developing research and investing in smart grids and renewables. To do this, support was needed from public policies but the contribution of the European private sector would also be crucial.

Lastly, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ highlighted the importance of the social aspects of the energy transition, reiterating that there was a Social Climate Fund with the precise aim of helping the most vulnerable. In conclusion, he underlined that the Commission was launching a debate with stakeholders that day to lay the groundwork for subsequent decision-making.

For his part, Mr HOEKSTRA stressed that achieving the climate objectives would require a differentiated approach from one Member State to another, and that sharing the effort would have to take account of the starting points specific to each country. While the investments announced to meet the objectives did seem considerable, they were nevertheless crucial and would have to be provided through a combination of public and private investment.

He also noted that the EU would have to stay on target in terms of the reforms agreed as part of the energy transition and, to this end, it would have to implement all the legislation adopted at European level.

Ms SIMSON in turn mentioned the importance of guaranteeing a predictable regulatory framework for industry. As regards energy costs for industry, the EU was in a very different position compared to other parts of the world. As such, it had to speed up its green transition in order to gradually replace its energy imports with energy from renewables and thus boost competitiveness.

The PRESIDENT noted that, although certain Member States had recently announced that gas would replace coal as a transitional energy source, hydrogen would eventually have to replace gas. She believed that there were already many solutions available for boosting competitiveness, reducing energy costs and cutting red tape. It would be possible to address all these concerns under the European Green Deal, which represented a genuine growth strategy for the EU for the coming decades.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the Communication in COM(2024) 62/3 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;
- adopted the Communication in COM(2024) 63/3 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, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2024) 63, SWD(2024) 64 and SEC(2024) 64, the contents of which were noted.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1. SPECIAL MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL (1 FEBRUARY 2024)

The PRESIDENT informed the College that, at the special meeting of the European Council on 1 February, the Heads of State or Government had unanimously agreed on the first ever revision of the European Union's Multiannual Financial Framework. She welcomed the fact that the agreement confirmed the priorities identified by the Commission and granted 80% of the

funding requested, adding that the proposed revision would provide the Union budget with the necessary resources to continue implementing these priorities.

The revised budget would, in particular, make it possible to establish a new Ukraine Facility totalling EUR 50 billion. She added that the revised budget also provided for additional funding to strengthen EU policies and actions in the internal and external aspects of migration, as well as to support EU partners in the Western Balkans, the Southern Neighbourhood and beyond. Finally, the revised budget would strengthen the EU's capacity to support Member States affected by natural disasters and to deploy international humanitarian aid where it was most needed.

The PRESIDENT concluded that the new STEP (Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform) would also help to ensure the Union's long-term competitiveness in the field of critical technologies.

11.2. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION, PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'EUROPEAN CANNABIS INITIATIVE' (C(2024) 821)

Ms JOUROVÁ presented to the College the request for registration of the European citizens' initiative entitled, in the authentic language (English), 'European Cannabis Initiative'.

The College had already received a request for registration from the organisers a few weeks earlier (see the minutes of the 2476th meeting of the Commission of 6 December 2023) and had decided to inform them of the need to amend the initiative. The citizens' initiative originally proposed had four objectives and a preliminary assessment carried out by the Commission had concluded that two of them fell outside its remit. The initiative could

therefore not be registered in the form presented, and the Commission had therefore asked the organisers to consider revising it, indicating that they had two months to do so.

The amended initiative now had three objectives, calling on the Commission to:

- convene a trans-European citizens’ assembly on cannabis policies, including sanctions and the overall consistency of policies implemented in the Member States;
- promote access to medical cannabis and allow the transportation of cannabis and its derivatives prescribed for therapeutic purposes to ensure the full enjoyment of the right to health;
- allocate the resources required for researching the use of cannabis for therapeutic purposes.

Ms JOUROVÁ explained that the Commission could not register the first objective of the initiative as it fell outside the Commission’s remit to submit a proposal for a legal act on this matter. She therefore proposed to partially register the initiative as regards the second and third objectives, which fulfilled the registration requirements.

The organisers would then be able to start collecting the required number of signatures, i.e. at least one million in seven Member States. The Commission would only need to examine the substance of the initiative after these signatures had been collected.

Following this presentation, the Commission confirmed that the citizens’ initiative entitled ‘European Cannabis Initiative’ partially fulfilled the conditions for registration. It therefore decided, in accordance with C(2024) 821, to inform the group of organisers and authorised Ms JOUROVÁ to sign the reply on behalf of the College, in the authentic language (English),

to send it to the initiative's organisers, 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.

*

* *

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

*

* *

The meeting closed at 14.37.