



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2024) 2510 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 5 February 2025

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2510th meeting of the Commission
held in Strasbourg
(Winston Churchill building)
on Tuesday 17 December 2024
(afternoon)**

PV(2024) 2510 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Tuesday 17 December 2024 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 17.03 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President
Ms RIBERA	Executive Vice-President
Ms VIRKKUNEN	Executive Vice-President
Mr SÉJOURNÉ	Executive Vice-President
Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member
Ms ŠUICA	Member
Mr KUBILIUS	Member
Mr SÍKELA	Member
Ms KADIS	Member
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member
Ms LAHBIB	Member
Mr BRUNNER	Member
Mr SERAFIN	Member
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member
Mr HANSEN	Member
Mr MICALLEF	Member

Absent:

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member
Ms KOS	Member
Ms ROSWALL	Member
Mr McGRATH	Member

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service
Ms ERIKSSON WATERSCHOOT	Deputy Director-General, DG Communication
Ms PINHO	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission
Mr ADAM	Deputy Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms MICELI	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms SEMLALI	Policy Assistant in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Mr TAQUET-GRAZIANI	Acting Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General
Ms BUKA	Secretariat-General

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2024) 2510/FINAL; SEC(2024) 2510/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) 2510)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 16 December 2024.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2508th and 2509th meetings of 4 and 11 December 2024 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2024) 158)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on Friday 13 December 2024 (RCC(2024) 158).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2016/1011 as regards the scope of the rules for benchmarks, the use in the Union of benchmarks provided by an administrator located in a third country, and certain reporting requirements (Regulation) – JONÁS FERNÁNDEZ report – 2023/0379 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 405.

- **Amendment of Regulations (EU) No 1092/2010, (EU) No 1093/2010, (EU) No 1094/2010, (EU) No 1095/2010 and (EU) 2021/523 as regards certain reporting requirements in the fields of financial services and investment support (Regulation) – SAUDARGAS (ex-KARAS) report – 2023/0363 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 420.

- **Amended proposal on a mechanism to resolve legal and administrative obstacles in a cross-border context (Regulation) – GOZI report – 2018/0198 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 417.

- **European Union labour market statistics on businesses, repeal of Council Regulation (EC) No 530/1999 and Regulations (EC) No 450/2003 and (EC) No 453/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Regulation) – TINAGLI report – 2023/0288 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2024) 413/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Strengthening the security of identity cards of Union citizens and of residence documents issued to Union citizens and their family members exercising their right of free movement (Council Regulation) – AZMANI report – 2024/0187 (CNS)**

Information set out in SI(2024) 414.

- **Amendment of Directive (EU) 2015/2302 to make the protection of travellers more effective and to simplify and clarify certain aspects of the Directive (Directive) – AGIUS SALIBA report – 2023/0435 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2024) 415.

- **European Defence Industry Programme and framework of measures to ensure the timely availability and supply of defence products – BELLAMY report – 2024/0061 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2024) 408/2.

- **Establishment of the Reform and Growth Facility for the Republic of Moldova (Regulation) – MIKSER & MUREŞAN report – 2024/0258 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2024) 419.

- **Meetings of the European Parliament Committee Chairs, the incoming Polish Presidency and the Commission Representative – Brussels, 9 and 10 December 2024 – with the IMCO, AGRI, TRAN, ENVI and EMPL Committees**

Information set out in SPI(2024) 36.

- **Meetings of the European Parliament Committee Chairs, the incoming Polish Presidency and the Commission Representative – Brussels, 12 December 2024 – with the JURI, INTA, ECON and LIBE Committees**

Information set out in SPI(2024) 37.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2024) 46)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2024) 46 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 11 December 2024.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2024) 295 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 9 and 15 December 2024.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2024) 296 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 9 and 15 December 2024.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2024) 297 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 9 and 15 December 2024 archived in Decide.

6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED

(SEC(2024) 298 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 16 and 20 December 2024.

6.5. COMMISSION DECISION GRANTING AN EMPOWERMENT AND A DELEGATION OF POWERS RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASYLUM, MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION FUND AND THE INTERNAL SECURITY FUND

(C(2024) 9038)

The Commission decided to extend the period of validity of Decision C(2018) 8999 granting an empowerment and a delegation of powers relating to the implementation of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund and the Internal Security Fund.

The Commission adopted the Decision in C(2024) 9038.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2024) 299/3)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2024) 86/2)

7.1. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – REORGANISATION OF COMMISSION DEPARTMENTS

(SEC(2024) 317 TO 326; PERS(2024) 88 TO 91)

In accordance with Commission Communication C(2017) 5231 adopted by the Commission on 31 July 2017 on organisation charts of Commission Directorates-General and services, the Commission decided to create a new Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA) and to transfer responsibilities, organisational entities and management posts between Directorates-General as set out in P(2024) 6 and SEC(2024) 317 to 326. Unless otherwise specified, these decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025 (see also items 7.1.1 to 7.1.14 below).

7.1.1. DG MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA AND THE GULF – PROPOSAL FOR AN ORGANISATION CHART, INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT GRADE AD15/16 AND TRANSFER OF AD14 OFFICIALS UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

(SEC(2024) 317; PERS(2024) 88)

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

- to approve the creation of the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA);
- to transfer the current function of Deputy Director-General NEAR.DGA2 from the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations to the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, and to rename it as Deputy Director-General (MENA.DDG);
- to transfer the temporary function of *hors classe* Adviser HR.HCA.2 from the Directorate-General for Human Resources and Security to the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf;
- to transfer the current function of Director NEAR.B, as well as three Units attached to it, from the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations to the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, and to rename them;
- to transfer the current function of Principal Adviser NEAR.PA02 from the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations to the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf, keeping the same name (MENA.PA01);
- to approve the creation of two additional Directorates and nine additional Units;
- to approve the transfer of parts of Directorate NEAR.A ‘Thematic

Support, Coordination of Policy and Financial Instruments’, of Directorate NEAR.R ‘Resources’, and of NEAR.01 ‘Migration’ from the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations to the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf;

- to approve the transfer of parts of the Units ‘Middle East, Central Asia’ (INTPA.C.1), ‘Finance & Contracts’ (INTPA.C.4) and ‘Sustainable Development Policy & Global Partnerships with UN’ (INTPA.D.2), as well as parts of the Directorates ‘Sustainable Finance, Investment & Jobs; Economy that works for the people’ (INTPA.E), ‘Green Deal, Digital Agenda’ (INTPA.F) and ‘Human Development, Migration, Governance & Peace’ (INTPA.G) from the Directorate-General for International Partnerships to the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf;
- to approve the organisation chart for the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf as set out in SEC(2024) 317;
- that the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf would also be supported by the ‘Risk Management’ Unit (INTPA.E.6) in the Directorate-General for International Partnerships and by the ‘IFIs and Investments’ Unit (ENEST.A.4) in the Directorate-General for Enlargement and the Eastern Neighbourhood;
- to approve the transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, of Mr Francisco GAZTELU MEZQUIRIZ, currently Director of Directorate NEAR.B in the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations, to the function of Director of the ‘North Africa’ Directorate (MENA.A) in

the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf;

- to approve the transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, of Ms Henrike TRAUTMANN, currently Principal Adviser for Reconstruction in Gaza (NEAR.PA02) in the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations to the function of Principal Adviser for Reconstruction in Gaza (MENA.PA01) in the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf;
- to approve the internal publication, at grade AD15/AD16, with immediate effect, of the vacancy notice set out in PERS(2024) 88 for the function of Deputy Director-General in the Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (MENA.DDG), in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations.

Unless otherwise indicated, these decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

**7.1.2. DG COMMUNICATION – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2024) 318)**

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

- to approve the creation of a temporary Task Force for ‘Strategic Communication and Countering Information Manipulation’, attached to the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Communication, for the duration of the current Commission’s term of office;

- to approve the creation of a temporary function of Head of the Task Force for ‘Strategic Communication and Countering Information Manipulation’, at Head of Unit level;
- to approve the creation of a team of experts who would support the Task Force’s work while remaining in their Directorate-General of origin;
- to approve the new organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Communication as set out in SEC(2024) 318.

These decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

7.1.3. DG ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2024) 319)

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

- to approve the suppression of the function of Director of Directorate ‘InvestEU & Financial Institutions’ (ECFIN.L) in the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs;
- to approve the transfer of the Units ‘InvestEU Governance & Advisory’ (ECFIN.L.2), ‘InvestEU Implementation’ (ECFIN.L.3) and ‘Investment Programmes Management’ (ECFIN.L.4) from the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs to the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, and their integration, respectively, as Units ‘InvestEU Governance & Advisory’ (GROW.C.5), ‘InvestEU Implementation’ (GROW.C.6) and ‘Investment Programmes Management’ (GROW.C.7);

- to approve the new organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs as set out in SEC(2024) 319.

Following this reorganisation, the total number of Directorates in the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs would be 9 and the total number of Units would be 34.

These decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

**7.1.4. DG EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND INCLUSION –
AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2024) 320)**

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

- to approve the transfer of the Unit ‘Disability and Inclusion’ (EMPL.D.3) – with the exception of the part relating to inclusion – from the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion to the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, and its integration as Unit ‘Disability’ (JUST.D.4);
- to approve the transfer of the Unit ‘Skills, Services, Professions’ (GROW.D.1) – with the exception of the part relating to services – from the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs to the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, and its integration as Unit ‘Professional Qualifications and Skills for Competitiveness’ (EMPL.B.5);
- to approve the new organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion as set out in SEC(2024) 320.

Following this reorganisation, the total number of Directorates in the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion would be 8 and the total number of Units would be 37.

These decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

**7.1.5. DG INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP
AND SMES – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2024) 321)**

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

- to approve the transfer of the Unit ‘Skills, Services, Professions’ (GROW.D.1) – with the exception of the part relating to services – from the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs to the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, and its integration as Unit ‘Professional Qualifications and Skills for Competitiveness’ (EMPL.B.5);
- to approve the transfer of the Units ‘InvestEU Governance and Advisory’ (ECFIN.L.2), ‘InvestEU Implementation’ (ECFIN.L.3) and ‘Investment Programmes Management’ (ECFIN.L.4) from the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs to the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, and their integration, respectively, as Units ‘InvestEU Governance and Advisory’ (GROW.C.5), ‘InvestEU Implementation’ (GROW.C.6) and ‘Investment Programmes Management’ (GROW.C.7);
- to approve the new organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, as set out in

SEC(2024) 321.

Following this reorganisation, the total number of Directorates in the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs would remain unchanged and the total number of units would be 37.

These decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

7.1.6. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2024) 322)

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

- to approve the transfer of the Unit ‘Disability and Inclusion’ (EMPL.D.3) – with the exception of the part relating to inclusion – from the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion to the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, and its integration as Unit ‘Disability’ (JUST.D.4);
- to approve the transfer of the sector ‘Integrity and Anti-corruption’ (HOME.A.4.001) from the Unit ‘Legal Affairs and Anti-corruption’ (HOME.A.4) in the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs to the Unit ‘Democracy, Anti-Corruption, Union Citizenship and Free Movement’ (JUST.C.4) in the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers;
- to approve the transfer of the position of Coordinator on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life from the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers to the Secretariat-General;
- to approve the transfer of the position of Coordinator on combating

anti-Muslim hatred from the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers to the Secretariat-General;

- to approve the transfer of the position of Coordinator for dialogue with churches, religious associations, and philosophical and non-confessional organisations from the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers to the Secretariat-General;
- to approve the new organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, as set out in SEC(2024) 322.

Following this reorganisation, the total number of Directorates in the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers would remain unchanged and the total number of units would be 22.

These decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

**7.1.7. DG NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ENLARGEMENT
NEGOTIATIONS – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION
CHART AND INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF A VACANCY
NOTICE FOR THE FUNCTION OF DEPUTY DIRECTOR-
GENERAL, AT GRADE AD15/16
(SEC(2024) 323; PERS(2024) 89)**

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

- to rename the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations as Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood, and to change its acronym from NEAR to ENEST;
- to approve the transfer of the function of Deputy Director-General (NEAR.DGA2), the temporary function of Principal Adviser

(NEAR.PA02) and the function of Director NEAR.B from the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations to the newly created Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA);

- to approve the new organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood (DG ENEST), as set out in SEC(2024) 323;
- to approve the internal publication, at grade AD15/16, with immediate effect, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2024) 89 for the function of Deputy Director-General in charge of Eastern Neighbourhood, Economic Investment Plans and Relations with IFIs, in the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DDGA1), in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations.

Following this reorganisation, the total number of Directorates in the Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood would be 5 and the total number of Units would be 24.

Unless otherwise indicated, these decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

7.1.8. DG STRUCTURAL REFORM SUPPORT – SUPPRESSION OF THE DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to suppress the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) and consequently:

- to suppress the function of Director-General of the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support;

- to incorporate all the activities of the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support into the ‘Reform and Investment’ Task Force (SG.REFORM), with the exception of:
 - the Unit ‘Cyprus Settlement Support’ (REFORM.A.3) and part of the sector ‘Financial and Contractual Management – Cyprus Settlement and Financial Instruments’ (REFORM.A.1.002), which are transferred to the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy;
 - part of the Unit ‘Governance and Public Administration’ (REFORM.B.2) and part of the Unit ‘Technical Support Coordination, Inter-institutional and Legal Affairs’ (REFORM.A.2), which are transferred to the Secretariat-General;
 - the function of Legal Adviser directly attached to the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support, and the political dialogue for the Cyprus settlement, which are transferred to the Secretariat-General.

These decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

7.1.9. DG REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2024) 324)

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

- to approve the transfer of the Unit ‘Cyprus Settlement Support’ (REFORM.A.3) from the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support to the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, and its integration as Unit ‘Cyprus Settlement Support’

(REGIO.DDG.04);

- to approve the transfer of part of the sector ‘Financial and Contractual Management – Cyprus Settlement and Financial Instruments’ (REFORM.A.1.002) from the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support to the Unit ‘Budget and financial management’ (REGIO.A.3) in the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy;
- to approve the new organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy, as set out in SEC(2024) 324.

Following this reorganisation, the total number of Directorates of the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy would remain unchanged and the total number of Units would be 32.

These decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

7.1.10. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART AND INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF A VACANCY NOTICE FOR THE FUNCTION OF PRINCIPAL ADVISER / HEAD OF TASK FORCE, AT GRADE AD14/15 (SEC(2024) 325; PERS(2024) 90)

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

- to approve the creation of a temporary Task Force for ‘Startups and Scale-ups’ (RTD.TF), attached to the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, for an initial period of three years; the Task Force would also be able to draw on the expertise of other Directorates-General that would support it in relevant policy areas in order to improve the conditions for startups and scale-ups;

- to approve the creation of a temporary function of Head of the Task Force for Startups and Scale-ups at the level of Principal Adviser;
- to approve the transfer of the function of Adviser for ‘Access to Finance for Innovation’ (RTD.A.ADV01) to this Task Force and rename it as Adviser for ‘Startups and Scale-ups’ (RTD.TF.ADV01);
- to approve the new organisation chart of the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation as set out in SEC(2024) 325;
- to approve the internal publication, at grade AD14/15, with immediate effect, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2024) 90 for the newly created function of Principal Adviser / Head of the Task Force for Startups and Scale-ups in the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations.

Unless otherwise indicated, these decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

7.1.11. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART AND INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF A VACANCY NOTICE FOR THE FUNCTION OF PRINCIPAL ADVISER / HEAD OF TASK FORCE, AT GRADE AD14/15 (SEC(2024) 326; PERS(2024) 91)

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

- to approve the creation of a temporary Task Force for ‘EU’s Future Competitiveness’, attached to the Deputy Secretary-General for Policy Coordination (DSG2), for an initial period of one year;

- to approve the creation of a temporary function of Head of the Task Force for EU's Future Competitiveness at the level of Principal Adviser;
- to approve the transfer of part of the Units 'Governance and Public Administration' (REFORM.B.2) and 'Technical Support Coordination, Interinstitutional and Legal Affairs' (REFORM.A.2) from the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support to the Secretariat-General, and their integration into the newly created Unit 'Implementation Support' (SG.A.7);
- to approve the transfer to the Secretariat-General of the function of Legal Adviser attached to the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support, and of the political dialogue for the Cyprus settlement;
- to approve the new organisation chart of the Secretariat-General as set out in SEC(2024) 326;
- to approve the internal publication, at grade AD14/15, with immediate effect, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2024) 91 for the newly created function of Principal Adviser / Head of the EU's Future Competitiveness Task Force in the Secretariat-General, in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations.

Following this reorganisation, the total number of Directorates of the General Secretary would remain unchanged and the total number of Units would be 43.

Unless otherwise indicated, these decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

**7.1.12. SG RECOVER – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION
CHART AND TRANSFER OF AD14 OFFICIALS UNDER
ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS
(SEC(2024) 326)**

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

- to rename the Recovery and Resilience Task Force (SG.RECOVER) as ‘Reform and Investment Task Force’ (SG.REFORM);
- that the mandate of the Task Force, as set out in the preamble and the fourth point of the Decision of 24 July 2020 (PV(2020) 2347) on the establishment of the Recovery and Resilience Task Force, is extended to include the activities of the parts of the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM) that are transferred to it;
- that the Reform and Investment Task Force (SG.REFORM) would remain in place until 31 December 2027;
- to approve the transfer of the functions of Director of the ‘Coordination, Resources and Aid Programme’ Directorate (REFORM.A) and Director of the ‘Support to Member State Reforms’ Directorate (REFORM.B) from the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support to the Reform and Investment Task Force, and to rename them as ‘Coordination, Finance and Communication’ (SG.REFORM.A) and ‘Technical Support Instrument (TSI)’ (SG.REFORM.E), respectively;
- to approve the incorporation of the other parts of the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support into the ‘Reform and

Investment Task Force’, with the exception of:

- the Unit ‘Cyprus Settlement Support’ (REFORM.A.3) and part of the sector ‘Financial and Contractual Management – Cyprus Settlement and Financial Instruments’ (REFORM.A.1.002), which are transferred to the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy;
 - parts of the Units ‘Governance and Public Administration’ (REFORM.B.2) and ‘Technical Support Coordination, Inter-institutional and Legal Affairs’ (REFORM.A.2), which are transferred to the Secretariat-General;
 - the function of Legal Adviser, attached to the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support, which is transferred to the Secretariat-General and attached to the Unit ‘Implementation Support’ (SG.A.7);
 - the political dialogue for the Cyprus settlement, which is transferred to the Secretariat-General;
- that the Reform and Investment Task Force would be composed of 5 Directorates, each comprising 4 Units, with the exception of Directorates B and D, which would each have 3 Units;
 - to approve the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2024) 326;
 - that, by way of derogation from Article 5(1)(a) of Decision C(2024) 6814, the Head of the Task Force would be authorising officer by delegation for the Reform and Investment Task Force, for the implementation of the Technical Support Instrument (TSI);
 - that, as regards the staff members of the Task Force, the Head of the

Task Force would exercise the powers conferred on the Director-General by the Commission decisions applicable to the appointing authority and the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment;

- that points 1, 4, 9 and 10, the first sentence of point 5, and the first sentence of point 6 of the Decision of 24 July 2020 (PV(2020) 2347) concerning the establishment of the Recovery and Resilience Task Force (RECOVER) would continue to apply;
- to approve the transfer, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, of Ms Judit ROZSA, currently Director of the ‘Coordination, Resources and Aid Programme’ Directorate (REFORM.A), to the function of Director of the ‘Coordination, Finance and Communication’ Directorate (SG.REFORM.A);
- to approve the transfer, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, of Ms Nathalie BERGER, currently Director of the ‘Support to Member State Reforms’ Directorate (REFORM.B), to the function of Director of the ‘Technical Support Instrument (TSI)’ Directorate (SG.REFORM.E).

These decisions would take effect on 1 February 2025.

7.1.13. DG TRADE – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to approve the change of name of the Directorate-General for Trade to Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security.

This decision would take effect from 1 February 2025.

7.1.14. TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to approve the following transitional arrangements applicable to the reorganisation:

- the Commission's central services shall monitor the implementation of the reorganisation and provide guidance; Commission Decision C(2004) 4274 of 9 November 2004 on revised guidelines on redeployment shall not apply to the reorganisation;
- where the responsibility for a decentralised agency or a joint undertaking is amended under this decision, the Commission shall be represented by the representatives of the Directorate-General to which this responsibility is transferred, at the hierarchical level established by the Commission Decision appointing the Commission representatives on the management board or equivalent body for the decentralised agencies, and the governing board for the joint undertakings; this arrangement shall apply until the Commission decisions appointing Commission representatives are amended by written procedure;
- where an amendment is made in respect of the Directorates-General responsible for an executive agency under this decision, all the Directorates-General responsible shall be represented in the Steering Committee; should this not be possible due to the limit on representatives laid down in the legal framework, the new Directorates-General in charge of the agency shall be temporarily represented by observers; this arrangement shall apply until the Commission decisions appointing Commission representatives are amended by written procedure;
- Mr SERAFIN, the Member of the Commission responsible, is

authorised to adopt, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, any other measure necessary for the implementation of the decisions on the restructuring of services taken under this agenda item.

In addition, the Commission took note of the following:

- transfers of allocations between Directorates-General would be included in the allocation decision for 2025;
- the new arrangements concerning delegation for budget lines would be reflected in Annex I to the 2025 Internal Rules defining the responsibilities of the authorising officers;
- the anticipated environment of the 2025 budget would take into account the provisions of this Decision;
- operational appropriations for 2025 would be made available to the receiving Directorates-General by way of (co)delegation;
- budgetary appropriations for contract staff and other persons to be transferred between Directorates-General would be based on staff serving on 1 December 2024; however, for the sake of the budgetary allocation, these figures would be adapted to the number and function group of the contract staff and other persons made available to the Directorates-General concerned in the 2025 draft budget;
- appropriations earmarked for contract staff and other persons financed under the former ‘BA-lines’ and under the ‘Research’ budget would be made available to the receiving Directorates-General by way of (co)delegation in accordance with the applicable internal rules;
- appropriations earmarked for contract staff and other persons

financed under the overall allocation for 2025 would be made available to the receiving Directorates-General under the annual clearing exercise in mid-2025; the other administrative appropriations financed by administrative budget lines would be co-delegated for 2025; should a new line be required it would be created in 2026;

- the acts of delegation to the Executive Agencies affected by the reorganisation (if any) would be amended to reflect the changes.

**7.2. DG ENERGY – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2024) 87 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the function of Director of the ‘Green Transition and Energy System Integration’ Directorate (ENER.C) in the Directorate-General for Energy (PERS(2024) 87).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 13 and 21 November 2024 (PERS(2024) 87/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants’ qualifications for the function. On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr JØRGENSEN, it then decided to appoint Mr Lukasz KOLINSKI to the function.

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

**7.3. EUROSTAT – AUTHORISATION FOR THE INTERNAL AND
INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD15/16, AND
EXTERNAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD15, OF A FUNCTION OF
DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2024) 92)**

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr DOMBROVSKIS, the Commission decided to authorise the internal and interinstitutional publication, at grade AD15/16, and external publication, at grade AD15, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2024) 92 for the function of Deputy Director-General – responsible for Directorates C, F and G (‘ESTAT.DDG’) – in Directorate-General Eurostat, in accordance with Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations.

This decision would take effect immediately.

7.4. DG INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMES – SECONDMENT IN THE INTEREST OF THE SERVICE OF AN AD14 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLES 37 AND 38 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr SÉJOURNÉ, the Commission decided:

- to approve the creation of a temporary function of Principal Adviser in the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs; this function would be abolished upon the departure of the job-holder;
- to approve the transfer, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, of Ms Merete CLAUSEN, currently Director of the ‘Investment’ Directorate (GROW.C) in the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, to this newly created function;
- to approve the secondment, in the interest of the service, under Articles 37 and 38 of the Staff Regulations, of Ms Merete CLAUSEN to the European Investment Fund (EIF) as from 16 January 2025 and for the duration of

her term of office as Deputy Director-General of the European Investment Fund.

These decisions would take effect on 16 January 2025.

7.5. DG INTERNAL MARKET, INDUSTRY, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SMES – TRANSFER IN THE INTEREST OF THE SERVICE OF AN AD14 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr SÉJOURNÉ, the Commission decided to transfer, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Giorgio CHIAIRON CASONI – currently Director of the ‘InvestEU and Financial Institutions’ Directorate (ECFIN.L) in DG Economic and Financial Affairs – to the function of Director of the ‘Investment’ Directorate (GROW.C) in the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs.

This decision would take effect on 1 February 2025.

**7.6. INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2024) 82 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the function of Director of the ‘Audit in Commission, Executive Agencies, EU Agencies and other autonomous bodies II’ Directorate (IAS.B) in the Internal Audit Service (PERS(2024)82).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 16 October and 14 November 2024 (PERS(2024) 82/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the function. In agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr SERAFIN, it then decided to appoint Mr Derek DUNPHY to the function.

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

7.7. SECRETARIAT GENERAL – COMMISSION DECISIONS ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

(C(2024) 9012; C(2024) 9013; C(2024) 9014)

The Commission decided that the professional activities envisaged by Mr Josep BORRELL, Ms Ylva JOHANSSON and Ms Jutta URPILAINEN, after leaving office as Members of the Commission, were compatible with Article 245(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and with the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, subject to certain specific conditions and obligations.

The Commission adopted the Decisions set out in C(2024) 9012, C(2024) 9013 and C(2024) 9014.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.8. DG BUDGET – OVERVIEW OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND DECENTRALISED APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2025

(SEC(2024) 375/2)

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to approve the Communication on the overview of human resources and decentralised appropriations for 2025 for Commission departments, as set out in SEC(2024) 375/2.

This decision would take effect on 1 January 2025.

8. **COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK - 2025 EUROPEAN SEMESTER - AUTUMN PACKAGE**
(COM(2024) 700 AND /2; RCC(2024) 160)
9. **RECOMMENDATION FOR A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON THE ECONOMIC POLICY OF THE EURO AREA**
(COM(2024) 704 AND /2; SWD(2024) 704 AND /2; RCC(2024) 160)
10. **COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE - ALERT MECHANISM REPORT 2025**
(COM(2024) 702; SWD(2024) 700; SWD(2024) 701; SWD(2024) 702; RCC(2024) 160)
11. **PROPOSAL FOR A JOINT EMPLOYMENT REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION AND THE COUNCIL**
(COM(2024) 701 AND /2; RCC(2024) 160)

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr SÉJOURNÉ introduced the set of measures being presented that day relating to the European Semester. This was the second part of the 2025 European Semester autumn package, the first part of which had been adopted by the Commission on 26 November, signalling the launch of the implementation cycle under the new economic governance framework. The European Semester was the main tool for coordinating the Member States' economic and fiscal policies as well as national and European policy objectives.

The Annual Sustainable Growth Survey was not part of this package, as the Commission would address those particular aspects early in 2025 when launching the strategic Competitiveness Compass initiative, which would set out the EU's

policy stance on competitiveness, decarbonisation and economic security. Lastly, Mr SÉJOURNÉ stressed that the measures being presented that day also contributed to bolstering the social and environmental aspects of the Semester and to aligning investments made at European and national level.

Ms MÎNZATU presented the Employment Report, which had been drawn up jointly by the Commission and the Council and, pursuant to Article 148 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), gave an annual overview of the employment situation in the EU and of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and the Employment Guidelines. The report had three main parts: (i) the first part presented the principal findings regarding the current state of the EU labour market and the policy implications thereof, (ii) the second part focused on implementation of the Employment Guidelines, and (iii) the third part provided a country-by-country analysis. This analysis was based on the Social Convergence Framework included in the revised economic governance framework and had identified ten Member States requiring further monitoring.

Ms MÎNZATU then reported on progress made towards achieving the 2030 targets under the European Pillar of Social Rights relating to employment, skills and poverty reduction.

As regards employment, the EU had achieved record figures in 2023, with an employment rate of 75.3%, which was close to the 78% target to be achieved by 2030. Despite this positive outcome, significant labour shortages remained in key sectors. The care and education sectors, key sectors in terms of strengthening the EU's preparedness, were particularly affected by these shortages, as were sectors that were important for competitiveness, such as construction, transport, and fields related to the science, technology, engineering and mathematics ('STEM') sectors.

She also stressed that young people, women, low-skilled workers, people with disabilities and people with a migrant background continued to be under-represented

in the labour market, while industries were struggling to find the workers they needed.

On skills, Ms MÎNZATU said that significant progress was still needed, as only 39.5% of adults in Europe participated in learning each year, which was well below the 60% target for 2030. She noted that low-skilled and unemployed people were especially affected by this lack of progress, and that the issue of mastering basic skills and digital skills was a cause for concern.

As regards the fight against poverty, the EU was still far off its target of reducing the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030. Currently, one in five adults and one in four children were at risk of poverty. She therefore considered it essential to implement the anti-poverty strategy and stated that achieving ambitious targets would require action at EU level in cooperation with the Member States.

Ms MÎNZATU then addressed a number of structural trends, including the decline in labour productivity. Labour productivity had continued to decelerate in 2023, after slowing significantly between 2010 and 2019. Several factors had contributed to this slowdown, such as significant gaps in research and development, high taxes, a lack of innovation and investment, fragmentation of the single market and complex regulation. In that connection, she stressed the need for urgent action to address the shortage of skilled workers in order to strengthen competitiveness.

She also pointed out that education systems required in-depth reform. Data from the PISA study showed that one in five 15-year-olds did not attain the minimum level of proficiency in mathematics and one in four did not have basic reading and science skills. Although education was a Member State competence, she felt that it was necessary for the EU to find ways of taking action at European level to improve the way in which training schemes helped prepare society for the future. In the first 100 days of its mandate, the Commission would present the new Union of Skills, which was designed to support the digital and green transitions. She stressed that

digitalisation had an impact on improving training programmes and learning aids and on the quality and number of available jobs.

Ms MÎNZATU concluded by stating that the report provided a starting point for highlighting the major policy changes that were required. She felt that education and skills needed to be addressed from the perspective of strengthening Europe's preparedness and that competitiveness could only be enhanced through investment, including investment in human resources, to ensure that the EU had a pool of talented, prepared and motivated individuals available to work.

In his presentation, Mr DOMBROVSKIS focused on the Recommendation for the Euro Area and the Alert Mechanism Report, reminding the meeting that the first part of the European Semester on the Member States' budgetary policies had been adopted by the Commission the previous month. The EU was currently facing a number of structural challenges linked to low productivity growth, population ageing and the green and digital transformation, against a background of fragmentation and increased tensions on the world stage. These challenges called for action at EU level in order to guarantee the EU's prosperity in the long term. In this connection, the policy guidance in the European Semester package would help the Member States to strike the right balance between the need to maintain macroeconomic stability and the promotion of growth and competitiveness.

The Recommendation for the euro area called on the Member States concerned to take steps to improve their competitiveness and productivity, with a view to (i) improving access to funding for businesses, (ii) fostering innovation, (iii) reducing the administrative burden and regulatory complexity, (iv) supporting public and private investment in common priorities, such as the digital and green transitions, and defence, and (v) continuing the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce. The Recommendation also called on the euro area Member States to ensure compliance with the new fiscal framework, something which the Commission would monitor as part of the European Semester spring package, in particular in connection with the country-specific recommendations.

Turning to the Alert Mechanism Report, Mr DOMBROVSKIS explained that it marked the start of the annual cycle designed to detect, prevent and correct macroeconomic imbalances. Regarding the situation in individual Member States, in 2025 the Commission would conduct in-depth reviews for the nine countries identified in spring 2024 as experiencing imbalances or excessive imbalances, namely: Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia and Sweden. Furthermore, that year's report had concluded that an additional in-depth review was warranted for Estonia on account of specific risks connected with newly emerging imbalances. The country continued to face accumulating competitiveness losses driven by strong cost pressures, a worsening current account, and rising house prices and household borrowing. The findings of the in-depth reviews would be presented in the spring.

Regarding the general situation, Mr DOMBROVSKIS drew the attention of the meeting to three key findings of the report, to wit: (i) despite the overall reduction in macroeconomic imbalances, cost competitiveness issues persisted in some Member States owing to high inflation in recent years, (ii) while debt levels had recently fallen thanks to strong nominal growth, government debt in some Member States remained high and could still rise, and (iii) particular attention should be paid to house prices where they were showing signs of overvaluation and continuing to rise.

In conclusion, Mr DOMBROVSKIS stressed that the challenges of the global geopolitical situation made it all the more important to coordinate economic and social policies across the Member States of the EU and that the European Semester would remain the key tool in that connection.

Regarding the EU's competitiveness and workforce challenges, the PRESIDENT mentioned the upcoming presentation of the Competitiveness Compass, which would draw on the recommendations made in the European competitiveness report by Mario Draghi and the single market report by Enrico Letta. The Communication would list the specific actions that were needed, serving as a road map to guide

efforts to boost the competitiveness and productivity of the EU's economy. She also stressed the importance for industrial sectors of the Clean Industrial Deal, the success of which would in turn depend on human capital, something that called for the implementation of the Union of Skills.

The PRESIDENT also referred to the demographic challenges facing the EU, in particular population shrinking and ageing. At the same time, the EU could congratulate itself on having the most educated population in the world and a high level of education among women, which was a unique asset on the world stage. The focus should be on identifying and eliminating the obstacles that prevented Europeans from reaching their full potential on the labour market, particularly young people, women and older people.

She also mentioned the importance of skilled legal migration to meet workforce needs, and the potential impact of artificial intelligence on the automation of certain tasks to the benefit of other activities.

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

- full support for the European Semester package presented that day;
- the acknowledgement of significant digital skills shortages in the labour market and in European society in general, which was an obstacle to competitiveness and resilience and paved the way for the dissemination of different forms of disinformation;
- in this context, the need to spur Member States to further develop digital education and training, to increase the percentage of women employed in the digital technology sector and to attract talent from all over the world to that sector;

- the implementation of the Demography Toolbox as an integral part of the Union’s actions to improve the labour market participation rate, competitiveness and cohesion of the Union, including initiatives to ensure affordable access to housing and childcare facilities, reduce labour and skills shortages, encourage active ageing and set up talent partnerships aimed at third countries;
- the need for the Union to be consistent in its various actions aimed at developing skills, reducing inequalities, creating a competitive and sustainable ecosystem for businesses, combating poverty, in particular among children and workers, and addressing the demographic challenge linked in particular to an ageing population and the divide between rural and urban areas;
- the recent downward trend in research and innovation investments as a percentage of GDP and the corresponding need for better coordination of public funding in order to incentivise more private investment in innovation;
- the fact that there was still a gap at European level between men and women in terms of both employment rates and pay levels, highlighting the need to remove obstacles to women’s participation in the labour market;
- similarly, the lack of integration of persons with disabilities into the labour market;
- the interdependence between the green transition and the development of skills needed in the future, hence the importance of decent retraining opportunities to ensure a just transition;
- the disparities between EU regions and the important role of local and regional authorities in coordinating reforms and investments in the context of the European Semester, cohesion policy and the Recovery and Resilience Facility;

- the need for a joint effort on the part of the Member States to develop a Savings and Investments Union, which would need to feature prominently in future European Semester packages.

In response to the comments on demographic trends, the PRESIDENT explained that research showed a strong correlation between a society's level of industrialisation and its birth rate. The average number of births per woman in Europe was thus significantly lower than the value of 2.1 needed to maintain the stability of a given population. She noted that a higher level of education among women was often associated with a lower birth rate, as women then prioritised career advancement. This trend was intrinsically linked to the availability of facilities that favoured better work-life balance, including accessible and high-quality childcare services.

The PRESIDENT concluded by stressing that it was crucial to invest in education and care systems, including not only childcare, but also care for the elderly and other related services, as such investments were beneficial for society as a whole and for the European economy.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the Communication set out in COM(2024) 700/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank, and, for information, to the national parliaments;
- adopted the Recommendation for a Council Recommendation in COM(2024) 704/2 for transmission to the Council and, for information, to the European Parliament, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank and the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2024) 704/2, the contents of which were noted;

- approved the Commission Communication in COM(2024) 702/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee, and, for information, to the European Central Bank, the Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank and the national parliaments, together with the staff working documents distributed as SWD(2024) 700, SWD(2024) 701 and SWD(2024) 702, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Joint Report in COM(2024) 701/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank, and, for information, to the national parliaments.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Ms KALLAS began her presentation on the latest developments in external relations by informing the College that the Foreign Affairs Council held on Monday 16 December had focused specifically on the situation in Syria, Georgia and Ukraine.

As regards Syria, a meeting had been held in Jordan on Saturday 14 December at the invitation of the Jordanian Minister for Foreign Affairs. It had brought together ministers from the Arab League, the United States and EU representatives to discuss the principles of engagement with Syria's new leadership. These principles were stability in Syria, guarantees regarding the country's future, the preservation of its territorial integrity and the promotion of an inclusive government representing the diversity of the Syrian people. These principles also stressed preventing radicalisation, protecting minorities from persecution and ensuring that no reprisals were taken.

She also reported that the Foreign Affairs Council had taken the decision to further its political engagement at another level, starting with the reopening of EU embassies in Syria. This would mean that the Chargé d’Affaires of the EU Delegation to Syria, who had until now been stationed in Beirut in Lebanon, would return to Damascus. The ministers had also discussed the possibility of adapting sanctions, subject to tangible positive steps being taken by Syria’s new leaders. This could mean that the existing restrictions would be eased, in particular by facilitating access to banking systems to support the country’s reconstruction efforts.

With regard to Georgia, Ms KALLAS informed the College that the Foreign Affairs Council had discussed imposing sanctions on the persons directly responsible for violence against protestors. She also noted that the Commission had been tasked by the Council with exploring the possibility of suspending the visa-free regime for diplomatic and service passports. Lastly, it had been agreed that the funding previously allocated to the Georgian government would henceforth be redirected towards civil society organisations and independent media.

With regard to Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, she announced that the Foreign Affairs Council had approved the adoption of the 15th package of individual and economic restrictive measures, aimed primarily at the shadow fleet, North Korean officials and, for the first time, the Chinese companies that were making the war possible, in particular by making drones. In this context, she reiterated the urgent need to step up the supply of munitions and aerial defences and increase support more generally for the Ukrainian defence industry.

In conclusion, Ms KALLAS stressed how strengthening Ukraine’s position on the battlefield was crucial for strengthening its hand in future negotiations. She considered that if Russia wanted to implement a ceasefire, it could simply start by stopping its bombing of Ukrainian territory.

The PRESIDENT drew the meeting to a close by informing the College that the Western Balkans Summit would take place in Brussels the next day, Wednesday

18 December. It would be followed by a meeting of the European Council on Thursday 19 December, which would focus in particular on the situation in the Middle East and Ukraine, and on strengthening the EU's role on the international scene, by tackling, among other issues, relations between the EU and the new US administration.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 17.54.