



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2025) 2513 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 26 February 2025

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2513th meeting of the Commission
held in Brussels
(Berlaymont)
on Wednesday 5 February 2025
(morning)**

PV(2025) 2513 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Wednesday 5 February 2025 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.03 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	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 ŠEFČOVIČ	Member
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member
Ms ŠUICA	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member
Mr KUBILIUS	Member
Ms KOS	Member
Mr SÍKELA	Member
Ms KADIS	Member
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member
Ms LAHBIB	Member
Mr BRUNNER	Member
Ms ROSWALL	Member
Mr SERAFIN	Member
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member
Mr McGRATH	Member
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member
Mr HANSEN	Member
Mr MICALLEF	Member

Absent:

Ms RIBERA

Executive Vice-President

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

Ms PINHO

Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission

Mr ADAM

Deputy Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT

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(2025) 2513/FINAL; SEC(2025) 2513/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(2025) 2513)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Tuesday 4 February 2025.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2024) 2510)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2510th meeting of 17 December 2024 and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2511th and 2512th meetings of 15 and 29 January 2024 until a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2025) 156)

The Commission took note of the outcome of the written exchange of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) for the week from 27 to 31 January 2025 (RCC(2025) 156).

The Commission approved the line proposed for the following point:

- **Amendment of Directive 2009/38/EC as regards the establishment and functioning of European Works Councils and effective enforcement of transnational information and consultation rights (Directive) – RADTKE report – 2024/0006 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 12.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2025) 204)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2025) 204 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 29 January 2025.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2025) 31 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 27 January and 2 February 2025.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2025) 32 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 27 January and 2 February 2025.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2025) 33 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 27 January and 2 February 2025 archived in Decide.

6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED
(SEC(2025) 34 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 3 and 7 February 2025.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2025) 35)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2025) 10)

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – EUROPEAN COMMISSION DECISION ON
POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITY OF A FORMER MEMBER OF THE
COMMISSION
(C(2025) 9001)

The Commission decided that the professional activity envisaged by Mr Josep BORRELL, after leaving office as a Member of the Commission, was 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 conditions and obligations.

The Commission adopted the decision in C(2025) 9001.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS: A COMPREHENSIVE EU TOOLBOX FOR SAFE AND SUSTAINABLE E-COMMERCE
(COM(2025) 37 AND /2; RCC(2025) 5)**

Ms VIRKKUNEN introduced the Communication on ensuring safe and sustainable e-commerce, focusing on the rise of online shopping across the EU. While acknowledging the benefits that this had brought, such as greater consumer choice and lower prices, the considerable challenges posed by the massive influx of often low-value parcels from third countries were evident.

She pointed out that almost 70% of Europeans regularly bought products online and that 12 million parcels entered the European market every day, with many of these packages not complying with EU safety, health and environmental standards. The current situation could therefore have a negative impact not only on consumer safety, but also on European companies' competitiveness.

Ms VIRKKUNEN explained that the existing enforcement mechanisms were struggling to cope with this influx. Customs authorities, for example, did not have sufficient resources to effectively carry out checks on this considerable volume of incoming parcels. Similarly, market surveillance authorities and those responsible for the enforcement of the Digital Services Act (DSA) were faced with a significant data gap, hampering their ability to identify and remove dangerous products from the market.

She also stressed the problem of unfair competition, as European companies, especially SMEs, were disadvantaged as a result of the influx of illegal goods, mainly coming from China. In addition, she warned of the environmental impact of these cheap and often low-quality goods, highlighting concerns related to their production, transport and the management of the waste they generated.

Ms VIRKKUNEN then presented the Communication's comprehensive approach to addressing these challenges. She began by pointing out that the Communication built on the existing legal framework, with a focus on significantly strengthening law enforcement. Therefore, one of the key strategies of this approach would be to improve coordination and exchange between the different competent authorities at EU and Member State level, as well as at international level. She also highlighted the importance of increasing the use of digital tools to proactively detect illegal products before they reached consumers.

Additionally, the Communication emphasised the need to proceed swiftly with the reform of the Customs Code, including the establishment of a centralised European authority and a data hub to improve the management of trade flows. It also proposed phasing out the customs duty exemption for products worth less than EUR 150 and introduced a new harmonised administrative fee for individual consignments, in order to better regulate cross-border transactions.

Lastly, Ms VIRKKUNEN stressed the environmental impact of these parcels, explaining the importance of strictly enforcing the legislation in force at all stages, from the production of goods to the treatment of waste. This was not only imperative for the environment and the safety of consumers, but also a necessity to ensure a level playing field for European businesses. She pointed out that compliance with European standards could sometimes put local actors at a competitive disadvantage, and that they needed to be addressed urgently.

Ms VIRKKUNEN concluded by stressing the importance of continuing discussions and strengthening cooperation between authorities, Member States and international partners to ensure the effective implementation of the proposed measures.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ pointed out that the number of low-value consignments, i.e. goods with a value not exceeding EUR 150, entering the European market had surged, rising from 2 billion parcels in 2022 to 4,6 billion in 2024. In response to this exponential growth, he stressed the need for urgent and decisive action and for a deep structural transformation.

He explained that these small parcels now accounted for almost 90% of the work of customs authorities, which highlighted the limitations of the current system. With a limited number of officers across the EU, customs authorities were struggling to cope with this increasing volume, especially as some suppliers were deliberately circumventing the EUR 150 threshold by splitting up consignments to evade customs duties. He also pointed out the shortcomings in coordination between customs and market surveillance authorities, which led to delays and inefficiencies in identifying and removing dangerous products.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ then presented the proposed structural reforms, stressing the need to speed up the most ambitious transformation of the Customs Union since its creation. A central feature of this reform was the establishment of a relatively small European customs authority, with around 250 officers, which would however have a transformative impact as a result of the introduction of a single integrated software system for all European customs officers. This shared digital tool would improve data analysis, risk-based controls and information exchange, thus ensuring more targeted action against illegal activities.

In addition, he announced the creation of a European customs data hub – a centralised database managed jointly by the Member States and the European Commission, which would provide intelligence and strategic analysis to address the challenges posed by e-commerce more effectively. He stressed the importance of removing the EUR 150 threshold for customs duties, explaining that, thanks to these new tools, customs officers would be better equipped to manage the additional workload. However, the removal of this threshold was conditional on the swift establishment of the new customs authority and the data hub.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ also stressed the need for smoother cooperation between customs services, market surveillance authorities and consumer protection bodies. He highlighted the problems in the current system, where the time it took for information to be shared and the differences between national procedures hampered the effectiveness of controls. In this context, he said that the Polish Presidency of the Council had committed itself to take work forward on the adoption of the

proposed Customs Union Reform Package. The goal was to have the new rules implemented by 2026 at the latest.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ concluded by highlighting the expected financial benefits of these reforms. It was estimated that removing the EUR 150 threshold would generate around EUR 1 billion in additional revenue per year. At the same time, savings of around EUR 2 billion per year were expected from the replacement of the current fragmented system with a single software platform.

Mr McGRATH then took the floor, stressing the two major priorities of the planned reforms: first, protecting EU consumers, and second, creating a level playing field for EU companies.

He noted the massive increase in the number of parcels entering the European market, echoing the figures mentioned by Ms VIRKKUNEN and Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, and pointed to the significant financial flows benefitting non-EU platforms. This increase could not be ignored, especially when young consumers were increasingly reliant on these platforms to access cheap products. He argued for a coordinated response and welcomed the Communication, which he considered to be a vital step forward in this respect.

Mr McGRATH drew attention to these platforms' economic models, which paid little heed to EU safety and environmental standards. These platforms also resorted to the widescale use of pervasive and addictive advertising, which fuelled over-consumption and had a negative impact on the EU's safety, health, environment and economy. In this context, he referred to a recent study carried out by the European Consumer Organisation, which had found that a vast majority of tested electronic products from these platforms did not comply with EU rules. He warned that these platforms were major gateways for dangerous products entering the EU.

He then described the EU's response, with reference to the recent implementation of the General Product Safety Regulation (GPSR). He explained that the EU would make full use of the tools available under this Regulation, such as mystery shopping, product tests and compulsory withdrawals. National authorities would

strengthen their coordination through the Commission to remove dangerous products from the market more efficiently.

The EU also intended to step up its bilateral engagement and dialogue with the Chinese authorities. In this connection, he referred back to the task given to him by the PRESIDENT to implement the Digital Fairness Act, which sought to protect consumers from unfair trading practices, such as dark patterns, addictive designs and fake discounts. He also reported on the implementing measures of this Act, which complemented the investigations carried out under the Digital Services Act (DSA).

Mr McGRATH concluded his presentation by addressing the challenges associated with the application of current legislation. He pointed out that, while the legislation on digital services (DSA) provided for the supervision of certain platforms for specific consumer matters, most consumer protection issues came under the responsibility of national market surveillance authorities, which operated through the consumer protection cooperation network. He welcomed how cross-border coordination had improved, but stressed that cooperation between 27 national authorities was still too slow and cumbersome. He mentioned the possibility of strengthening the Commission's role, suggesting that the Commission could be given greater investigative and enforcement powers to better protect consumers. This could complement the DSA in future.

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

- the major problem posed by the increasing number of parcels entering the EU;
- the expected positive impact of abolishing the EUR 150 threshold for customs duty exemption;
- the realisation that handling fees could represent a significant source of financing for the EU, especially given the expected volume of parcels;

- concerns regarding the 2026 implementation deadline for solutions, which was deemed too late;
- the importance of making consumers aware of the safety risks linked to these products, as well as of their environmental impact;
- the observation that, even with greater efforts, such a large volume of parcels represented a market surveillance challenge;
- the major difficulties experienced in recycling the products concerned, because of their low quality and potentially hazardous nature, which put the EU's recycling targets at risk.

At the end of the debate, the PRESIDENT underlined the urgent need for a rapid response to these challenges and believed that the 2026 deadline was too far away to implement solutions. She called for an innovative approach, and the speed, tenacity and ambition of the EU's measures. She warned about the possible risks from delays in dealing with dangerous goods, in particular as regards children's toys, the non-conformity of which could have serious health and safety repercussions. She also drew attention to the problem of excess packaging waste caused by these parcels, and the need to speed up efforts on waste recycling.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2025) 37/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The PRESIDENT began by hailing the success of the 2025 EU Ambassadors Conference, which was being held in Brussels from 3 to 7 February. Ms KALLAS

expressed her gratitude towards the Members of the College who had taken part in this event and stressed the crucial role played by ambassadors, who represented the EU on the ground and relayed Europe's political priorities.

Ms KALLAS then drew the College's attention to the worrying situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. She strongly condemned Rwanda's violations of the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of international law, and welcomed the fact that a truce had been announced. She indicated that the matter would be discussed during a dedicated session at the next Foreign Affairs Council. Although the Member States were open to the idea of imposing targeted sanctions against Rwanda's military chain of command, they were not in favour of suspending the Memorandum of Understanding on critical raw materials with Rwanda.

On the Middle East, Ms KALLAS referred to the concerns expressed by Arab partners following the US President's recent statements on Gaza. She welcomed the fact that the EUBAM Rafah mission had been redeployed.

She then turned to the situation in Ukraine, stressing that Russia's objective remained the same and that very intense fighting continued. She stressed the urgent need to step up support for Ukraine in several key areas.

Next, Ms KALLAS noted that student protests in Serbia were intensifying, with political and societal groups increasingly involved. She pointed out that, although the situation remained complex, there had been no violence against protesters.

Lastly, Ms KALLAS welcomed the fact that, on 4 February 2025, the European Commission and the Republic of Moldova had agreed on a comprehensive strategy for Moldova's energy independence and resilience, which would apply for the next two years. The strategy had a two-fold objective of decoupling Moldova from insecure energy supplies from Russia and fully integrating it into the EU energy market. She also emphasised that this represented an opportunity for rapprochement with Transnistria.

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

- the economic and geopolitical dimensions of the situation in Moldova, as well as the significant progress made to bolster its energy independence and resilience;
- in that connection, the role of the Moldova Growth Plan and the recent letter of intent signed by the Moldovan Government and the European Commission, which laid the foundations for a comprehensive energy support package;
- a reminder that Moldova was also part of the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and that, in that context, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre could be activated at any time to ensure an effective response in the event of a crisis in the region;
- the importance of monitoring developments in Serbia closely, in particular to see how President Vučić responded to the demands made by protesters and non-governmental organisations, as a number of their demands overlapped with expectations on the EU side;
- the need for the EU to take a firm stance vis-à-vis Rwanda in order to address violations of the territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC);
- in that connection, the strong signal already sent by the Commission, which had withdrawn from development projects relating to raw materials exploration in Rwanda and held high-level talks with the leaders of the DRC, Angola and Kenya;
- the more cautious approach favoured by the Member States, who backed gradually stepping up political pressure on Rwanda;
- as regards the situation in Gaza, despite the surprising proposals put forward by the new US administration, the need for the EU to maintain its commitment to the two-state solution, work to strengthen the Palestinian Authority and continue

seeking lasting solutions for displaced people in Gaza that went beyond providing humanitarian aid.

The PRESIDENT concluded the meeting by reminding the College of the Commission's visit to Kiev on 24 February, the anniversary of the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 9.59.