



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2025) 2514 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 19 March 2025

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2514th meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 11 February 2025

(afternoon)

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Single sitting: Tuesday 11 February 2025 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 18.15 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	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr SÉJOURNÉ	Executive Vice-President	Items 7 to 11
Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President	Items 8 (in part) to 11
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President	
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member	
Ms ŠUICA	Member	Items 8 (in part) to 11
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	Items 1 to 8, 10 (in part) to 11
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member	
Mr KUBILIUS	Member	
Ms KOS	Member	Items 10 (in part) and 11
Ms KADIS	Member	
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member	
Ms LAHBIB	Member	
Ms ROSWALL	Member	
Mr SERAFIN	Member	
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member	
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member	
Mr McGRATH	Member	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member	
Mr HANSEN	Member	
Mr MICALLEF	Member	

Absent:

Mr SÍKELA	Member
Mr BRUNNER	Member

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 PODESTA	Deputy 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
Mr WHELAN	Adviser 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
Mr CHARLES	Secretariat-General

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2025) 2514/FINAL; SEC(2025) 2514/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) 2514)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 10 February 2025.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2511th, 2512th and 2513th meetings of 15 and 29 January and 5 February 2025 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2025) 158)

The Commission took note of the outcome of the written exchange of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) for the week from 3 to 7 February 2025 (RCC(2025) 158).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

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

Line set out in SI(2025) 18/2.

- **Amendment of Directive 2008/98/EC on waste (Directive) – ZALEWSKA report – 2023/0234 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 19.

- **Objection pursuant to Rule 115(2) and (3) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament on the draft Commission implementing decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified maize DP910521 pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council – BORZAN & HÄUSLING & HAZEKAMP report – D102174/03 – 2024/3010 (RSP) / Objection pursuant to Rule 115(2) and (3) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament on the draft Commission implementing decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified maize MON 95275 pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council – BORZAN & HÄUSLING & HAZEKAMP report – 2024/3011 (RSP)**

Line set out in SP(2025) 19.

- **Provision of macro-financial assistance to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (Decision) – IMART report – 2024/0086 (COD) / Provision of macro-financial assistance to the Arab Republic of Egypt (Decision) – IMART report – 2024/0071 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 20.

- **Oral Question O-000001/2025 – US AI chip export restrictions – A challenge to European AI development and economic resilience**

Line set out in SP(2025) 39/2.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2025) 205)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2025) 205 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 5 February 2025.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2025) 41 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 3 and 9 February 2025.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2025) 42 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 3 and 9 February 2025.

**6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2025) 43 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 3 and 9 February 2025 archived in Decide.

**6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED
(SEC(2025) 44 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 10 and 14 February 2025, and of the finalisation written procedure.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2025) 45 AND /2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2025) 11 AND /2)

During the meeting, Mr SERAFIN presented an additional proposal for an administrative decision, which was tabled directly to the College for approval.

It was proposed to appoint Mr Pierre BASCOU as Deputy Director-General in charge of Directorates E and G in DG Agriculture and Rural Development. He highlighted Mr BASCOU's skills and merits in relation to the post to be filled.

7.1. DG AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT – APPOINTMENT OF A DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL, AT GRADE AD15/16

(PERS(2025) 15 TO /3)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Director-General in charge of Directorates E and G in DG Agriculture and Rural Development (PERS(2025) 15).

The Commission took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 19 September and 1 October 2024 (PERS(2025) 15/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT,

and after consulting Mr HANSEN, it then decided to appoint Mr Pierre BASCOU to the post.

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

7.2. *DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – TRANSFER OF AN AD15 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS*

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms VIRKKUNEN, the Commission decided to transfer, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Pearse O'DONOHUE – currently Director of the 'Future Networks' Directorate in DG Communication Networks, Content and Technology – to the post of Director of the 'Security' Directorate (HR.DS) in DG Human Resources and Security.

This Decision would take effect on 1 March 2025.

7.3. *DG MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA AND GULF – TRANSFER OF AN AD15 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS*

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms ŠUICA, the Commission decided to transfer, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Michael KARNITSCHNIG – currently Director of the 'External Relations' Directorate in the Secretariat-General – to the post of Director of the 'Gulf' Directorate (MENA.C) in DG Middle East, North Africa and Gulf.

This decision would take effect on 16 February 2025.

7.4. *DG ENLARGEMENT AND EASTERN NEIGHBOURHOOD – APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR, DEPUTY CHAIR, MEMBERS AND SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS OF THE UKRAINE FACILITY AUDIT*

BOARD**(PERS(2025) 12)**

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided, with respect to the Ukraine Facility Audit Board:

- to appoint the following Members, in accordance with Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1697:
 - Mr Marek BELKA, as Chair,
 - Mr Gijs DE VRIES, as Deputy Chair,
 - Mr Gunnar WÄLZHOLZ, as Member;
- to draw up the following list of substitute Members, by order of priority, for the purposes of Article 4(4) and (6) of Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1697:
 - Mr Mindaugas PAKSTYS,
 - Mr Lars Lage BENDE,
 - Mr Peeter LATTI;
- to designate Mr Marek BELKA, Mr Gijs DE VRIES and Mr Gunnar WÄLZHOLZ as Special Advisers to the Director-General of DG Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood;
- that, in cases where the application of Article 4(4) and (6) of Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1697 was triggered, the substitute that would be appointed would be designated as Special Adviser to the Director-General of DG Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood, under the same conditions as the person they were replacing, for the period of time required for them to perform their duties, and, as regards

paragraph (6), within the limits set out in Article 4(7) of Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1697. This appointment was subject to the condition that the substitute would continue to meet the conditions required to perform the duties concerned and that they were willing to carry out the necessary tasks;

- to authorise the Director-General of DG Human Resources and Security to implement this decision by signing the contracts on behalf of the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment.

These decisions would take effect on 16 February 2025.

7.5. SELECTION OF THE CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN FISCAL BOARD **(PERS(2025) 13)**

The Commission took note of the information set out in point 3 of PERS(2025) 11 and, on a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr DOMBROVSKIS, decided:

- to approve the list of proposed appointees as Chair and Members of the European Fiscal Board;
- to ask the Secretary-General to communicate this decision to the European Parliament and the Council for the purposes of the consultation provided for in Article 3(4) of Commission Decision 2024/2115;
- to ask the Director-General of DG Budget to immediately notify the Budgetary Authority of their intention to conclude Special Adviser contracts for the persons concerned once the consultation provided for in Article 3(4) of Commission Decision 2024/2115 had been conducted;
- to ask the Secretary-General to present to the Commission in good time, after having received feedback from the European Parliament and the

Council, the proposal for appointment of the Chair and the Members of the European Fiscal Board;

- to confirm Mr Martin LARCH in his role as Head of the Secretariat of European Fiscal Board.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.6. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF A LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF HEAD OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION IN KYRGYZSTAN, AT GRADE AD9/14
(PERS(2025) 14)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 4 of PERS(2025) 11, and, on a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided to approve the list of candidates that had been submitted to it for the appointment of the Head of the European Union Delegation in Kyrgyzstan.

On this basis, the final decision on the transfer would be taken by the competent authority of the European External Action Service.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME 2025 – MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER: A BOLDER, SIMPLER, FASTER UNION
(COM(2025) 45 TO /4; RCC(2025) 6)**

The PRESIDENT referred to the geopolitical context of the Commission's 2025 work programme, stressing the need to boost competitiveness, strengthen security and increase the EU's economic resilience. It was also important to make EU legislation simpler and more coherent.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ then presented the 2025 work programme in more detail, pointing out that it was the current Commission's first work programme. The EU had to be more agile and more efficient to make its ambitions a reality. To this end, competitiveness and simplification, in particular by cutting red tape, had been made key priorities.

The work programme also underlined the need to i) protect the EU's prosperity and ensure its security, ii) keep on track as regards the EU's climate goals, while at the same time supporting the rule-based international order, and iii) defend democracy while fighting against disinformation and maintaining the EU's unique social model. Mr ŠEFČOVIČ believed that this work programme turned the Commission's political guidelines into a concrete action plan for the first year of the Commission's term of office, taking account of a changing world and the growing challenges facing the EU.

In this connection, he stressed the importance of acting quickly and decisively. He invited the Members of the College and their departments to ensure strict compliance with the better regulation phases, including in relation to the submission of proposals to the Regulatory Scrutiny Board. It was also essential to deliver the planned initiatives by the set deadlines. This was even more important, because the 2025 work programme set the tone for the next five years.

In parallel, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ noted that the work programme highlighted the Commission's priority action areas and flagship initiatives, but did not rule out the presentation of other initiatives that might become necessary. It was also vital to deliver on the commitments made in other Commission strategic documents, such as the Competitiveness Compass and the future Clean Industrial Deal.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ then briefly presented the structure of the work programme, which consisted of a descriptive section and five annexes. The descriptive section set out the Commission's policy agenda and put forward certain key initiatives for 2025. The five annexes brought together i) new initiatives, for the first time with specific simplification-focused colour coding; ii) the annual plan on evaluations and fitness checks; iii) proposals pending adoption by the co-legislators; iv) proposals that the Commission intended to withdraw; and v) envisaged repeals. He drew particular attention to the importance of that year's proposed withdrawals, stressing that this annex sent a clear political signal that the Commission no longer wanted to devote resources to initiatives that had been blocked for years and were unlikely to be adopted.

He thanked all the Members of the College and their teams for their excellent cooperation on this important exercise and for the consultations held with the various stakeholders. He also welcomed the efforts made to bring the document into line with the Communication on simplification, which was being presented in parallel. In conclusion, he stated that work on preparing the Commission's 2026 work programme would begin in spring 2025, with a view to it being adopted in October.

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

- recognition of the quality of the presented work programme, and its alignment with the Commission's political priorities, especially the importance of focusing efforts on the EU's competitiveness and security challenges;
- the opportunity to reduce the list of proposals pending adoption by the co-legislators and to expand the list of withdrawals when no progress had been made on certain files in subsequent months;
- the possible progress to be made during the Polish and Danish presidencies of the Council on certain proposals on the withdrawals list;

- the wish that other key initiatives be included in the work programme.

In response to certain points raised, Mr ŠEFČOVIČ clarified that some initiatives were only in the early stages of preparation and that the Commission would continue its work in 2025 with a view to their subsequent presentation. Lastly, he explained that some proposals had been placed on the withdrawals list because no progress had been made for more than a decade.

As regards the withdrawals list, the Secretary-General pointed out that it was a proposal from the Commission, and that the European Parliament and the Council would then have between three and six months to give their opinion on this proposal.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2025) 45/4 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.

9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – A SIMPLER AND FASTER EUROPE: COMMUNICATION ON IMPLEMENTATION AND SIMPLIFICATION (COM(2025) 47 TO /3; RCC(2025) 7)

The PRESIDENT introduced the Communication on implementation and simplification by referring to the discussions in the European Council on reducing the administrative burden. In this regard, she noted that, while the Commission departments could justify their specific reporting requirements, there was no systematic and cross-cutting process to identify and streamline redundant or contradictory requirements.

The PRESIDENT stressed the urgent need for a real commitment to simplification, to the benefit of European businesses and the competitiveness of the EU. She pointed out that the Commissioners' mission letters provided for a thorough review of the reporting requirements in their respective policy areas in order to alleviate the regulatory burden on companies. In addition to reducing the volume of reports, she felt that the Commission's ability to make effective use of the data collected, to ensure its validity and accuracy, and to use it to inform policy decisions, should also be developed. She highlighted the role that artificial intelligence could play in managing and analysing this flow of information.

Lastly, she mentioned the communication challenges linked to the simplification efforts. While new initiatives such as the Competitiveness Compass and the upcoming Clean Industrial Deal offered an ambitious vision for Europe, she stressed the importance of also carrying out the less visible but equally essential work of simplifying existing regulations at the same time.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS then presented the Communication, stressing that it was a comprehensive action plan for implementation and simplification that would guide the Commission's work in this area.

The link between competitiveness and simplification had already been extensively discussed, particularly in the context of Mr Mario Draghi's report and the Competitiveness Compass. The accumulation of rules over time at different levels, their increased complexity and the challenges in implementing them had a significant impact on the EU's competitiveness, thus limiting its economic potential and prosperity. Two-thirds of European companies regarded the excessive regulatory burden as a major barrier to investment. Mr DOMBROVSKIS reiterated the Commission's commitment to its green, digital and social objectives, but also warned of the risk of jeopardising the effective implementation of EU rules as a result of increasing the obligations for citizens, businesses and administrations.

In this context, the Communication set out an ambitious agenda to deliver fast and concrete results, setting clear objectives. Mr DOMBROVSKIS highlighted the simplification proposals set out in the Commission's work programme for that year and stressed the need to adopt them as a matter of priority. These included three '*omnibus*' proposals to reduce regulatory and administrative burdens for businesses, as well as a set of other related initiatives. However, this was only the first phase of a programme that would cover the next five years. He explained that the Communication introduced new tools, such as reality checks, stress tests and implementation dialogues, which would play a key role in ensuring the success of this programme.

The Communication also placed greater emphasis on implementation throughout the policy cycle. This included close cooperation with Member States and stakeholders from early on in the process to identify potential constraints even before legislative proposals were drafted. Mr DOMBROVSKIS also mentioned the need for clear implementation strategies to anticipate the practical application of the adopted texts.

He also announced that the Members of the Commission would conduct implementation dialogues with stakeholders at least twice a year to monitor the progress of simplification efforts, while the Commission departments would carry out reality checks. He noted that the first such check had already been carried out the previous week. Each Commission department would also be responsible for drawing up a multi-annual stress test plan for the existing rules, again involving dialogue with stakeholders and establishing which actions needed to be given priority.

The Communication set specific targets, already revealed in the Competitiveness Compass, to reduce the administrative burden on all firms by at least 25% and on SMEs by 35%. Mr DOMBROVSKIS explained that this effort was not limited to primary law, as some of the administrative obligations arose from secondary law through implementing and delegated acts. He therefore encouraged Commissioners

to examine also those specific acts, which could present opportunities for simplification and burden reduction.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS committed to reporting regularly on progress and practical results achieved on the ground, notably via annual reports on implementing and enforcing legislation. He also pointed out that stricter checks would be carried out so that legislative proposals did not harm competitiveness or SMEs without structural measures to mitigate undesirable effects.

Lastly, he stressed the need to work closely with the co-legislators, pointing out that the Commission's legislative proposals were adopted, and then implemented, at the end of the inter-institutional legislative process. With that in mind, he indicated that the Commission would work with the co-legislators to prioritise simplification proposals and pay more attention to the practical impact of legislation on the ground. Mr DOMBROVSKIS also emphasised the importance of impact assessments in evaluating the consequences of significant changes made by the co-legislators. A simplified methodology had been developed in that regard to ensure that decisions were taken in the light of the results of those assessments.

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

- broad support for the Communication and its objectives;
- a recognition that maintaining the status quo was no longer an option given the scale of the challenges facing the EU and the expectations of Member States, businesses and citizens;
- the need to quantify progress on simplification and demonstrate progress made to all relevant stakeholders;
- the case for using digital tools, especially artificial intelligence, to identify and eliminate excessive information requests;

- the importance of broad political engagement and dialogue with the European Parliament, Member States and stakeholders to ensure support for simplification efforts and avoid creating new uncertainties;
- concerns about the responsibilities of the European institutions in assessing the impact of amendments proposed in the legislative process;
- a warning against equating simplification with deregulation, and the need to eliminate redundancy and unnecessary burdens without jeopardising essential safeguards, especially in health, defence and security;
- a call to encourage Member States to continue simplification also at national level to complement EU efforts;
- the need to simplify rules in the defence sector, building on the forthcoming defence white paper and *omnibus*, accompanied by structural dialogue with the sector;
- a call to broaden this defence *omnibus* beyond industry to include investment in industrial infrastructure impacted by existing regulations;
- a question about simplifying rules affecting several sectors, and a reference to agriculture in that regard;
- the urgent need to simplify research and innovation programmes, as excessive reporting requirements were often perceived as more time-consuming than the actual research;
- a call for a more pragmatic approach based on deliverables.

In response to some of the issues raised, Mr DOMBROVSKIS clarified several points. On the question of quantifying administrative burdens, he referred to Eurostat's estimates of costs totalling EUR 150 billion a year. With regard to

simplification, he reiterated the 25% reduction target, i.e. savings of EUR 37.5 billion in annual administrative costs by the end of the term of office.

As regards the use of digital tools, the Commission was working on setting up European data centres to retrieve information from company databases. This data could then be re-used, eliminating the need for businesses to provide the same information several times and in different formats.

As regards the concerns about impact assessments, he referred to the 2016 interinstitutional agreement on Better Law-Making, which provided for the Council and the European Parliament to assess the major legislative changes they wished to introduce.

The PRESIDENT concluded by stressing the importance of quantification for measuring progress made. Setting quantified targets not only allowed progress on initiatives to be monitored but also provided a reference point for subsequent comparisons. Once the Commission had demonstrated tangible progress, it would be able to encourage Member States to make similar reductions at national level.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2025) 47/3 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.

**10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – THE ROAD TO THE NEXT MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK
(COM(2025) 46 TO /3; RCC(2025) 8)**

The PRESIDENT highlighted three major and recurrent challenges involved in preparing the next Multiannual Financial Framework: (i) the firm position held by some Member States in favour of keeping the EU budget at 1% of European Gross Domestic Product (GDP); (ii) the opposition of other Member States to any change in the amounts allocated to the common agricultural policy or cohesion policy; and (iii) the tendency of Member States to try to increase the funds allocated to them, without necessarily taking into account the general European interest.

The PRESIDENT added that, despite the limitations of the EU budget, the Member States demanded immediate solutions at European level in the event of a crisis. In this complicated context, she considered it essential that the Commission achieve a balanced and consensual internal approach when preparing the next Multiannual Financial Framework, bearing in mind that the decision on the final framework was a matter for the Member States.

Mr SERAFIN presented the Communication proposed that day for approval by the College, pointing out that it marked the beginning of the political process of preparing the Multiannual Financial Framework. The text was based on the conclusions of the recent College seminar on the subject. The Communication analysed the multiple challenges to be addressed simultaneously, including the necessary modernisation of cohesion policy and the Common Agricultural Policy, the financing of European security, the issue of greater national contributions, the difficulty of increasing the EU's own resources and the obligation to repay loans contracted under the NextGenerationEU instrument. At the same time, the Communication outlined ideas that could guide the development of the future Multiannual Financial Framework. In this context, the focus was on simplification, flexibility and a more targeted approach, taking into account the situation in each Member State.

Mr SERAFIN added that several key issues required further reflection at European level, in particular (i) identifying key European priorities for which common funding would bring greater added value than national funding, (ii) the right balance

between flexibility and predictability in the next EU budget, (iii) how to strengthen the focus on performance without compromising the protection of EU taxpayers' financial interests, (iv) repayment of NextGenerationEU borrowing, while maintaining adequate funding for EU priorities, and (v) identifying new own resources. These questions would have to be answered in a political debate involving all the relevant stakeholders; that day's Communication provided a very solid basis for starting these discussions.

Mr SERAFIN stated that he had already begun a tour of Europe to consult all stakeholders: the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the regions, those responsible for implementation, and the beneficiaries of EU funds. He stressed the importance of listening to their experience, considering this the best way to identify means of improving the EU budget. He therefore encouraged all Members of the College to take a similar approach, noting that drawing up a credible proposal would require a collective effort on the part of the Commission. Lastly, he welcomed the prospect of working closely with all Commission Members, cabinets and departments to prepare this proposal for a new Multiannual Financial Framework.

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

- gratitude for this Communication, which was very timely and which faithfully reflected the balance of views expressed at the recent College seminar;
- the importance of a thorough consultation of all cabinets in order to prepare a new orientation debate of the College, which would enable a more rational and targeted proposal for the financial framework to be drawn up;
- the need for a clear description of the geopolitical challenges currently facing the EU, accompanied by appropriate financing proposals to make the EU's external action faster and more visible;

- the need to convince the Member States to accept an increase in the EU budget, taking into account the limited room for manoeuvre owing to the repayment of NextGenerationEU borrowing, alongside increased needs, particularly in the field of defence and security, whilst also maintaining the financing of traditional EU policies that had proven their effectiveness;
- the importance of simplifying and modernising the EU budget by involving the regions in political debates and reviewing the shared management of a cohesion policy which should be maintained or even strengthened.

At the end of the debate, Mr SERAFIN noted that the Commission's attention should from then on focus on the structure of the financial framework. The Commission would have to ensure that expectations regarding the size of the future financial framework were properly managed, while demonstrating that a reduction in the EU budget would not be appropriate in the current geopolitical context.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT reminded the meeting that the next Multiannual Financial Framework would run until 2035 and that it was not realistic to imagine that the EU's priorities, and thus the funding thereof, would remain unchanged over such a long period. She also highlighted the need to modernise the budget and improve the efficiency of the investments made, in particular in terms of reforms and innovations. Lastly, she confirmed that the College would hold a new policy debate before the adoption of the proposal for a financial framework that summer.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2025) 46/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments.

11. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Ms KALLAS gave an overview of the latest developments in EU's external relations by referring more specifically to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in Serbia and in Gaza. She also mentioned the recent exchanges with the US administration.

The Commission took note of this information.

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

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The meeting closed at 19.41.