



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2025) 2518 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Strasbourg, 1 April 2025

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2518th meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 11 March 2025

(afternoon)

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- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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REPEALING DIRECTIVE 2008/115/EC OF THE EUROPEAN
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Single sitting: Tuesday 11 March 2025 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13:09 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
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member
Ms ŠUICA	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Mr KUBILIUS	Member
Ms KOS	Member
Mr SÍKELA	Member
Mr KADIS	Member
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member
Mr BRUNNER	Member
Ms ROSWALL	Member
Mr SERAFIN	Member
Mr McGRATH	Member
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member
Mr HANSEN	Member
Mr MICALLEF	Member

Absent:

Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member
Ms LAHBIB	Member

Mr JØRGENSEN

Member

Ms ZAHARIEVA

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

Ms PETKOVA

Director of Coordination and Administration in
the PRESIDENT's cabinet

Ms HILI

Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet

Ms REILLY

Member of 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.

The PRESIDENT opened the meeting by hailing the Commission's achievements over the first 100 days of its term of office. During that time, the EU had been faced with considerable geopolitical challenges, which had led to significant progress on major issues, particularly defence and competitiveness. She believed that the experience gained during this initial phase had fully confirmed the relevance of the three main pillars set out in the 2024-2029 political guidelines and the mission letters sent to the Members of the College, namely prosperity, security and democracy.

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1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2025) 2518/FINAL; SEC(2025) 2518/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) 2518)

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

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2514th, 2515th, 2516th and 2517th meetings of 11, 19 and 26 February and 5 March 2025 until a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2025) 162)

The Commission took note of the outcome of the written exchange of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) for the week from 3 to 7 March 2025 (RCC(2025) 162).

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) 42.

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

Line set out in SI(2025) 43.

- **Amendment of Directive 2011/16/EU on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation (Council Directive) – LALUCQ report – 2024/0276 (CNS)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 53.

The Commission took note of the following point:

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

Line set out in SI(2025) 44.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2025) 209)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2025) 209 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 5 March 2025.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2025) 70 ET SEQ.)

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

6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2025) 71 ET SEQ.)

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

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2025) 72 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 March 2025 archived in Decide.

6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED
(SEC(2025) 73 AND /2)

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

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2025) 74)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2025) 20)

**7.1. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – EUROPEAN COMMISSION DECISIONS
ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF FORMER MEMBERS
OF THE COMMISSION**
(C(2025) 9002; C(2025) 9003; C(2025) 9004; C(2025) 9005; C(2025) 9006)

The Commission decided that the professional activities envisaged by Mr Josep Borrell, Mr Paolo Gentiloni and Mr Johannes Hahn, 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 conditions and obligations.

The Commission adopted the Decisions set out in C(2025) 9002, C(2025) 9003, C(2025) 9004, C(2025) 9005 and C(2025) 9006.

**7.2. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – ANNUAL REPORT ON THE APPLICATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IN 2024
(SEC(2025) 100)**

The Commission took note of the annual report on the application of the Code of Conduct for the Members of the European Commission in 2024, as set out in SEC(2025) 100.

**8. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL LAYING A FRAMEWORK FOR STRENGTHENING THE AVAILABILITY AND SECURITY OF SUPPLY OF CRITICAL MEDICINAL PRODUCTS AS WELL AS THE AVAILABILITY OF, AND ACCESSIBILITY OF, MEDICINAL PRODUCTS OF COMMON INTEREST, AND AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2024/795
(COM(2025) 102 TO /3; RCC(2025) 18)**

The PRESIDENT introduced the proposal for a Regulation to improve the availability in the EU of critical medicines and those of common interest, highlighting the major advances made in the health sector following the COVID-19 pandemic. She referred in particular to the creation of the European Health Union and pointed out that one of its key objectives was to ensure a fair distribution of

critical medicines throughout the EU, thus guaranteeing that all patients in need could access them.

Ms RIBERA pointed to the difficulties linked to shortages of certain critical medicines, which were essential for the treatment of patients. In response to this challenge, she stressed that the EU needed to address vulnerabilities in the supply chains of these medicines in order to reduce over-reliance on a limited number of suppliers from third countries.

The proposed Regulation thus aimed to foster collaboration between Member States and the Commission on public procurement and coordination of strategic projects, diversifying sources of supply and strengthening European production capacities for critical medicines and their components. Ms RIBERA said that this would fully incorporate the criteria of environmental and social sustainability, while protecting the EU's financial interests. She added that the Commission would also examine ways of improving access to critical medicines through further initiatives, such as specific State aid guidelines.

Mr VÁRHELYI noted that the Regulation proposed that day was intended to address the structural challenges of value chains and to secure the supply, not only of critical medicines identified by the European Medicines Agency, but also of other medicines of common interest. He made special mention of orphan medicinal products for rare diseases and new antibiotics, the availability of which was not guaranteed by the normal functioning of the market.

In this regard, he noted that most Member States had reported an increasing number of shortages of medicines, which was particularly problematic in small Member States where the marketing of certain pharmaceutical products was not always economically viable. Over the period 2008-2021, the duration of shortages in the EU remained close to 102 days on average, with higher durations of particular concern for cardiovascular medicines as well as for antibiotics, diabetes treatments and oncology medicines. Around half of these shortages were due to manufacturing

difficulties, due in particular to the availability of active substances and generic products mainly imported from a limited number of third countries.

Mr VÁRHELYI clarified that this proposal was not limited to a regulatory exercise, but responded to a market failure, giving priority to boosting pharmaceutical production in Europe, and as a result, the supply of medicines in the EU. He believed that the participation of more Member States in investment projects would make it economically viable for companies to supply planned quantities of certain pharmaceutical products over extended periods. Increases in manufacturing capacity may also be accelerated by simplifying administrative procedures and, where appropriate, by State aid.

The proposal also aimed to strengthen demand-driven measures. With this in mind, the public procurement component would encourage Member States to coordinate their efforts and make markets more predictable for businesses. To this end, the Commission would support collaborative procedures between different Member States in order to address disparities in the availability of critical medicines and other medicinal products of common interest. Buyers would also have to use an extended set of criteria in their procurement procedures that included, in addition to price, the diversification of suppliers, monitoring of supply chains, and production within the EU, as necessary.

In conclusion, Mr VÁRHELYI highlighted the fundamental role of international partnerships for the EU's security of supply. In this regard, he pointed out the competitive advantage of the candidate countries, which had production costs comparable to those of major world exporters and which could become part of European value chains as soon as the EU acquis in the pharmaceutical sector had been adopted. He believed that this approach would promote production in partner countries while contributing to their own security of supply.

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

- the importance of this proposal for the safety and preparedness of the EU, and its contribution to a coordinated approach to production capacities and critical medicines reserves, taking into account the specificities of each Member State;
- the importance of promoting investment, administrative simplification and strengthening European competitiveness in the implementation of this new approach, which would also involve financing pharmaceutical innovation, including in the context of the discussions on the new Multiannual Financial Framework;
- supply-chain vulnerabilities highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic and, therefore, the need to reduce dependence on third countries through an appropriate regulatory framework to support research and make the European pharmaceutical sector more attractive;
- disparities between national systems in terms of access to critical medicines and their reimbursement, justifying the use of single market instruments and European funds to ensure their availability and more equitable access across the EU.

The PRESIDENT wound up the debate by pointing out that the single market was a major asset for the EU, while highlighting the potential for harmonisation and optimisation in respect of certain products. She stressed the stability and predictability that the European internal market already offered to the pharmaceutical sector, and reaffirmed the Commission's commitment to continue efforts to reduce energy costs and simplify the regulatory environment.

Following these presentations, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 102/3, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee, as well as to the national parliaments.

9. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING A COMMON SYSTEM FOR THE RETURN OF THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS STAYING ILLEGALLY IN THE UNION, AND REPEALING DIRECTIVE 2008/115/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL, COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2001/40/EC AND COUNCIL DECISION 2004/191/EC (COM(2025) 101 AND /2; RCC(2025) 19)

The PRESIDENT referred to the significant progress made during the Commission previous term of office thanks to the Pact on Migration and Asylum, in particular in terms of cooperation with the EU's partner countries. However, she stressed that the return of persons in an irregular situation deserved particular attention, as the effective return rates across the EU currently reached only around 20%, with variations across Member States.

Ms VIRKKUNEN noted that the proposal for a Regulation presented that day was a major political priority for this Commission. Given that return rates remained largely unsatisfactory, the free movement of persons in an irregular situation in the Schengen area not only jeopardised the credibility of European migration policy but also hindered the effective protection of people in genuine need of asylum.

She said that there were currently 27 different return systems and that the aim was to replace the 2008 Directive with a Regulation to create clear and uniform rules across the EU. She explained that the proposal for a Regulation was balanced, promoting a European approach, a more binding system of mutual recognition and a simplification of administrative formalities for the Member States. She also clarified the obligations of the persons concerned and the detention arrangements for persons considered at risk, while upholding fundamental rights.

She stressed the importance of supporting partner countries in the proper implementation of the provisions and of exploring innovative solutions, for example with regard to return centres facilitating the readmission of persons in an irregular

situation where other solutions proved ineffective.

Ms VIRKKUNEN concluded her presentation by calling for EU Member States and partner countries to be supported in their swift and effective implementation of the new European return policy, which was a central pillar of the Pact on Migration and Asylum.

Mr BRUNNER then reminded the meeting of the double precondition for returns, namely, on the one hand, the proper functioning of the EU's internal processes and, on the other hand, cooperation from third countries on the readmission of their nationals. The objective of the proposal for a Regulation submitted to the College that day was to improve the EU's internal processes, which currently had a number of shortcomings.

To this end, the proposed Regulation established a clear and uniform procedure for the adoption of return decisions by all Member States, including the creation of a European return decision and the mutual recognition of such decisions. The Regulation would also make it possible to apply stricter measures to deal with problematic cases involving security risks. Threats to the EU's security must be addressed through longer periods of detention, entry bans and forced returns, always in full respect of fundamental rights.

As regards the arrangements for cooperation with third countries, Mr BRUNNER referred to the systematic issuing of readmission applications, the authorisation of data transfers to those countries and the creation of a legal framework allowing Member States to set up return platforms that complied with international law and fundamental rights. Greater efforts would be required under the Team Europe approach to build partnerships with key countries of origin and transit.

He also pointed out that the EU rightly applied some of the highest asylum standards in the world and that, with the Pact on Migration and Asylum, it was setting up a robust system for managing and speeding up these processes. However, the viability of this system required effective management of the return of persons

who did not have the right to remain on the territory of the Union.

Mr BRUNNER concluded that, once the Pact was fully operational and asylum applications were being processed more quickly, the aim would be to limit the number of third-country nationals with no legal status on EU territory. Citizens would judge the capacity of European leaders to act by how efficiently and effectively they managed returns.

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

- the timeliness and balanced nature of the proposal as a step toward a more homogeneous and effective EU policy on returns and the fight against human trafficking;
- the importance of preserving the Schengen acquis and avoiding the proliferation of national controls to ensure security at the internal borders of the Union;
- the essential role of mutual recognition of national return decisions, currently voluntary but eventually mandatory, in order to avoid circumvention of the rules of European migration policy through secondary movements;
- the value of innovative solutions, such as potential return platforms in third countries, in effectively implementing European migration policy;
- the contribution of the proposal to the fight against illegal immigration, in full respect of fundamental rights and the rights of the most vulnerable;
- the usefulness of dedicated partnerships with third countries and those in the EU's immediate neighbourhood, particularly around the Mediterranean, and the importance, in this context, of being able to attract the necessary talent from those countries through legal channels;

- questions related to the financing of the proposed migration policy, including voluntary returns, and the role of the European agency Frontex in this context;
- finally, the desire for swift adoption of this Regulation by the co-legislators with a view to rapidly reaping the benefits of a fair and firm return policy on the ground.

The PRESIDENT concluded the discussion by welcoming the balanced approach of the proposal, which would make it possible to optimise return procedures while fully respecting fundamental rights. She also highlighted the need for rigorous and consistent implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum, accompanied by clear communication on its objectives and the means deployed to achieve them.

Lastly, she stressed the importance of stronger engagement with partner countries, in particular through the European Global Gateway strategy, in order to support their development and promote channels of legal migration that would be beneficial to all parties.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 101/2, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Data Protection Supervisor, and to the national parliaments.

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The meeting closed at 14.14.