



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2025) 2521 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 14 May 2025

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2521st meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 1 April 2025

(afternoon)

—

PV(2025) 2521 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic –

EN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance list	5-6
1. AGENDAS (OJ(2025) 2521/FINAL; SEC(2025) 2521/FINAL)	7
2. WEEKLY MEETING OF HEADS OF CABINET (RCC(2025) 2521).....	7
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES (PV(2025) 2517; PV(2025) 2517, PART II; PV(2025) 2518).....	7
4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2025) 166)	7
5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2025) 212).....	9
6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS.....	10
6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2025) 91 ET SEQ.).....	10
6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2025) 92 ET SEQ.)	10
6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2025) 93 ET SEQ.)	10
6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED (SEC(2025) 94 AND /2).....	10
7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2025) 95).....	10
7.1. EUROSTAT – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15 (PERS(2024) 9 TO /3).....	11
7.2. DG ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS – APPOINTMENT OF A PRINCIPAL ADVISER AT GRADE AD14/15 (PERS(2025) 32 AND /2).....	11
7.3. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – CLOSURE OF A SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR A POST OF PRINCIPAL ADVISER AT GRADE AD14/15 (PERS(2024) 90).....	12
7.4. DG DIGITAL SERVICES – AUTHORISATION OF THE INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14/15, AND EXTERNAL	

PV(2025) 2521 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

EN

<i>PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14, OF A DIRECTOR POST (PERS(2025) 33).....</i>	<i>12</i>
7.5. <i>DG DIGITAL SERVICES – AUTHORISATION OF THE INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14/15, AND EXTERNAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14, OF A DIRECTOR POST (PERS(2025) 34).....</i>	<i>13</i>
7.6. <i>SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – EUROPEAN COMMISSION DECISIONS ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF FORMER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION (C(2025) 9009; C(2025) 9010; C(2025) 9011; C(2025) 9012).....</i>	<i>13</i>
8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON PROTECTEU – A EUROPEAN INTERNAL SECURITY STRATEGY (COM(2025) 148 TO /4; RCC(2025) 25)	14
9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – A MODERNISED COHESION POLICY: THE MID-TERM REVIEW (COM(2025) 163 TO /3; RCC(2025) 27)	18
10. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATIONS (EU) 2021/1058 AND (EU) 2021/1056 AS REGARDS SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ADDRESS STRATEGIC CHALLENGES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW (COM(2025) 123 TO /3; RCC(025) 27)	18
11. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2021/1057 ESTABLISHING THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND + (ESF+) AS REGARDS SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ADDRESS STRATEGIC CHALLENGES (COM(2025) 164 TO /3; RCC(2025) 27).....	18

12. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2019/631 TO INCLUDE AN ADDITIONAL FLEXIBILITY AS REGARDS THE CALCULATION OF MANUFACTURERS' COMPLIANCE WITH CO2 EMISSION PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR NEW PASSENGER CARS AND NEW LIGHT COMMERCIAL VEHICLES FOR THE CALENDAR YEARS 2025 TO 2027 (COM(2025) 136 TO /5).....	24
13. OTHER BUSINESS.....	25
<i>EU-US TRADE RELATIONS</i>	25

Single sitting: Tuesday 1 April 2025 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.06 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Ms VIRKKUNEN	Executive Vice-President	
Mr SÉJOURNÉ	Executive Vice-President	
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President	
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Ms ŠUICA	Member	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Mr KUBILIUS	Member	
Ms KOS	Member	
Mr SÍKELA	Member	
Mr KADIS	Member	Items 8 (in part) to 13
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Ms LAHBIB	Member	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Mr BRUNNER	Member	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Ms ROSWALL	Member	
Mr SERAFIN	Member	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Mr McGRATH	Member	
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Mr HANSEN	Member	
Mr MICALLEF	Member	

Absent:

Ms RIBERA	Executive Vice-President
Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
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 VAN KEMSEKE	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Item 12
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) 2521/FINAL; SEC(2025) 2521/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) 2521)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 31 March 2025.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2025) 2517; PV(2025) 2517, PART II; PV(2025) 2518)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2517th and 2518th meetings of 5 and 11 March 2025, and held over approval of the minutes of its 2519th and 2520th meetings of 19 and 26 March 2025 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2025) 166)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on Friday 28 March 2025 (RCC(2025) 166).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Prevention of plastic pellet losses to reduce microplastic pollution (Regulation) – LUENA (ex-ALBUQUERQUE) report – 2023/0373 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 73/2.

- **Soil Monitoring and Resilience (Soil Monitoring Law) (Directive) – HOJSÍK report – 2023/0232 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 74.

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

Line set out in SP(2025) 124/2.

- **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)**

Line set out in SP(2025) 115.

- **Objection pursuant to Rule 115 (2) and (3) of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure – Draft Commission Implementing Decision on the financing of the LIFE programme and the adoption of the work programme for the years 2025, 2026 and 2027, and in particular Annex I thereto – D103679/01 – 2025/2584 (RSP)**

Line set out in SP(2025) 119.

- **Common rules for exports: suspending certain parts of Regulation (EU) 2015/478 as regards imports of Ukrainian products into the European Union (Regulation) – 2025/0056 (COD)**

Line set out in SP(2025) 116.

- **Position to be taken on behalf of the European Union within the Trade Specialised Committee on Administrative Cooperation in VAT and**

Recovery of Taxes and Duties established by the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community, of the one part, and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, of the other part (Council Decision) – 2025/0026 (NLE)

Line set out in SI(2025) 78/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Establishment of a common data platform on chemicals, laying down rules to ensure that the data contained in it are findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable and establishing a monitoring and outlook framework for chemicals (Regulation) – TSIODRAS (ex-SPYRAKI) report – 2023/0453 (COD) / Amendment of Directive 2011/65/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the re-attribution of scientific and technical tasks to the European Chemicals Agency (Directive) – TSIODRAS (ex-SPYRAKI) report – 2023/0454 (COD) / Amendment of Regulations (EC) No 178/2002, (EC) No 401/2009, (EU) 2017/745 and (EU) 2019/1021 of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the re-attribution of scientific and technical tasks and improving cooperation among Union agencies in the area of chemicals (Regulation) – TSIODRAS (ex-SPYRAKI) report – 2023/0455 (COD)**

Information set out in SP(2025) 114/2.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2025) 212)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2025) 212 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 26 March 2025.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2025) 91 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 24 and 30 March 2025.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2025) 92 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 24 and 30 March 2025.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2025) 93 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 24 and 30 March 2025 archived in Decide.

6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED

(SEC(2025) 94 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 31 March and 4 April 2025.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2025) 95)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**(PERS(2025) 31)****7.1. EUROSTAT – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14/15****(PERS(2024) 9 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the ‘Business and Trade Statistics’ Directorate at Eurostat (PERS(2024) 9 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 24 July and 19 September 2024 (PERS(2024) 9/3).

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 DOMBROVSKIS, it then decided to appoint Ms Petra SNEIJERS to the post.

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

7.2. DG ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS – APPOINTMENT OF A PRINCIPAL ADVISER AT GRADE AD14/15**(PERS(2025) 32 AND /2)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Principal Adviser on sustainable growth and the European Semester at the Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (PERS(2025) 32).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 27 February and 6 March 2025 (PERS(2025) 32/2).

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 DOMBROVSKIS, it then decided to appoint Mr Tuure Taneli LAHTI to the post.

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

**7.3. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – CLOSURE OF A SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR A POST OF PRINCIPAL ADVISER AT GRADE AD14/15
(PERS(2024) 90)**

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms ZAHARIEVA, the Commission decided to close the selection procedure for the post of Principal Adviser/Head of the Task Force on Startups and Scale-ups at the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, without making an appointment.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.4. DG DIGITAL SERVICES – AUTHORISATION OF THE INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14/15, AND EXTERNAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14, OF A DIRECTOR POST
(PERS(2025) 33)**

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms VIRKKUNEN, the Commission decided to authorise the internal and interinstitutional publication, at grade AD14/15, and external publication, at grade AD14, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2025) 33 for the post of Director of the 'Digital Enablers and Innovation' Directorate at the Directorate-General for Digital Services, 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.

**7.5. DG DIGITAL SERVICES – AUTHORISATION OF THE INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14/15, AND EXTERNAL PUBLICATION, AT GRADE AD14, OF A DIRECTOR POST
(PERS(2025) 34)**

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms VIRKKUNEN, the Commission decided to authorise the internal and interinstitutional publication, at grade AD14/15, and external publication, at grade AD14, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2025) 34 for the post of Director of the ‘Digital Workplace and Infrastructure’ Directorate at the Directorate-General for Digital Services, 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.

**7.6. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – EUROPEAN COMMISSION DECISIONS ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF FORMER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION
(C(2025) 9009; C(2025) 9010; C(2025) 9011; C(2025) 9012)**

The Commission decided that the professional activities envisaged by Mr Josep Borrell, Ms Stella Kyriakides 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 conditions and obligations.

The Commission adopted the Decisions set out in C(2025) 9009, C(2025) 9010, C(2025) 9011 and C(2025) 9012.

8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON PROTECTEU – A EUROPEAN INTERNAL SECURITY STRATEGY (COM(2025) 148 TO /4; RCC(2025) 25)

The PRESIDENT pointed out that the Internal Security Strategy proposed that day sought to strengthen the ability of the EU and its Member States to guarantee the security of European citizens. This Communication supplemented the European Preparedness Strategy and the European Defence White Paper. These initiatives, together with the future European Democracy Shield, formed an overall framework for a safe, secure and resilient EU for the benefit of all European society.

Ms VIRKKUNEN stressed that this strategy addressed new types of challenges, in particular hybrid threats and cybercrime, through a series of specific measures. Noting that almost two thirds of European citizens were concerned about security issues and expected a response at EU level, she emphasised that, according to recent analyses, organised crime had now become more sophisticated, international and technological. In the light of these developments, concerted action at EU level was imperative to support the steps taken at national level by the Member States. She was convinced that the EU had the tools and measures needed to tackle these threats.

However, the use of technology and access to data were areas where law enforcement was still lagging behind the criminals, as regards both street crime and online crime. A roadmap was being drafted to address this situation and to make it easier to access data legally, while maintaining a proper balance between protecting privacy and enforcing the law effectively. The strategy also sought to review and

strengthen the mandates of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the European Union Agency for Criminal Justice Cooperation (Eurojust), the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) and the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), and integrate security considerations into all EU policies from the outset.

Mr BRUNNER emphasised that the ProtectEU Strategy represented the third pillar of the EU's security policies, after defence and preparedness, and ahead of the European Democracy Shield. This strategy would help promote a new security culture within the EU by raising awareness of the security challenges and by integrating security considerations into all EU policies. The newly created Security College was emblematic of this approach and showed how the Commission worked as a team.

The strategy covered a whole range of ambitious initiatives. The Commission was proposing specific measures and calling for their effective implementation. He was pleased with the favourable reception given by the Member States and the security community to these initiatives, especially the strengthening of Europol and Frontex and the modernising of the rules on organised crime.

On the delicate issue of access to data and encryption, Mr BRUNNER advocated a gradual, cautious approach – taking account of different viewpoints – that would be fleshed out in a future roadmap. He also stated that there was a clear path forward on operational cooperation, stressing that a robust system of interoperability was needed to make it easy to exchange data on borders, visas, police, the judiciary, asylum and migration. The planned enhancement of the Schengen information system would contribute towards this objective.

On preventing and mitigating hybrid threats, the strategy set out measures at EU level for pan-European infrastructure, such as submarine cables, satellites and telecommunication networks.

Mr BRUNNER pointed out that the fight against serious organised crime was a fundamental part of ProtectEU, emphasising that urgent action was needed to make organised crime less profitable. He called for strict monitoring and the seizure of criminal funds, in particular by targeting underground banking and the use of cryptocurrencies. In this connection, he highlighted the crucial role played by the EU Anti-Money Laundering Authority (AMLA) and the importance of implementing the Anti-Money Laundering Directive. The new EU Drugs Strategy, the expanded European Ports Alliance and the EU Action Plan against Drug Trafficking were key measures for combating organised crime.

In conclusion, he stressed the global dimension of ProtectEU, which sought to set up a wide network of security partnerships with third countries, and underlined the importance of stepping up ‘security diplomacy’ to promote the EU’s security interests at international level.

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

- the broad support for the strategy and the collaborative approach for its preparation;
- the importance of systematically integrating and mainstreaming the security dimension into all EU policies;
- the need to improve coordination between the EU’s different agencies and bodies on security issues;
- the need to strengthen judicial and criminal-justice cooperation with third countries, as part of a Team Europe approach, paying particular attention to the Mediterranean region;
- the active promotion of the public consultation on the European Democracy Shield, in order to secure the involvement of all stakeholders;

- the impact of new technologies on crime, and the possibility of the EU's enemies exploiting this to achieve their aims;
- the importance of finding a balance between providing access to data and protecting fundamental rights, while at the same time supporting innovation and the fight against crime;
- the need for additional rules to provide a framework for cryptocurrencies and to strengthen the fight against money laundering, while at the same time simplifying procedures;
- the need for appropriate mechanisms to root out corruption;
- the review of the EU's anti-fraud approach, to avoid duplication and to clarify the role of the different parties involved;
- the strategic role in security of transport infrastructure, which was becoming a potential target;
- the economic dimension of security and, in this context, the importance of ports, which would be the subject of a forthcoming comprehensive strategy;
- the importance of guaranteeing the public safety of European citizens and, in this connection, combating gender-based violence in particular.

The PRESIDENT wrapped up the discussion by emphasising the importance of implementing the proposed initiatives effectively. She also stressed the need to better inform European citizens about current threats, by presenting specific and meaningful measures that addressed their concerns.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2025) 148/4 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 AND THE COUNCIL – A MODERNISED COHESION POLICY: THE MID-TERM REVIEW**
(COM(2025) 163 TO /3; RCC(2025) 27)
- 10. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATIONS (EU) 2021/1058 AND (EU) 2021/1056 AS REGARDS SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ADDRESS STRATEGIC CHALLENGES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW**
(COM(2025) 123 TO /3; RCC(2025) 27)
- 11. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2021/1057 ESTABLISHING THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND + (ESF+) AS REGARDS SPECIFIC MEASURES TO ADDRESS STRATEGIC CHALLENGES**
(COM(2025) 164 TO /3; RCC(2025) 27)

The PRESIDENT pointed out that the aim of this mid-term review of cohesion policy was to make it more effective by encouraging Member States and regions to invest in the EU's strategic priorities, while maintaining its core aim of reducing economic, social and territorial disparities. She recalled that the initial framework for this policy had been established six years earlier. Despite global warming already being a major concern at the time, she noted that the current geopolitical landscape was now marked by new critical challenges, such as competitiveness, defence and security, which made this mid-term review all the more essential.

Mr FITTO began by expressing the hope that this proposal for a mid-term review would be adopted swiftly by the co-legislators, in order to allow Member States and regions to update their cohesion programmes before the end of the year and for these new programmes to start being implemented in early 2026. He stressed the urgency of this update, in particular to support the planned increase in defence

spending. He explained that, at the start of the Commission's term of office in December 2024, he had sent a letter to all the ministers responsible for cohesion, calling on them to speed up the implementation of their programmes and adapt them to the new priorities. Exchanges with stakeholders, as well as his visits to Member States, had confirmed the need for solutions tailored to local realities, based on approaches that differed according to the specificities of each territory.

As regards the relatively low rate of implementation of the 2021-2027 cohesion programmes, Mr FITTO pointed out that this was a regular occurrence at the beginning of a multiannual financial cycle. This trend had been accentuated by exceptional factors, in particular the COVID-19 pandemic and the priority given to the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). He felt that this situation did not reflect a malfunctioning of cohesion policy, but highlighted a need for modernisation. The current programmes, negotiated in 2021 and formalised in 2022, had only recently become operational, while the global context and the EU's priorities had changed profoundly at the same time.

Turning to the prospects for the future, he called for a reflection on the future Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to be launched without delay, building in particular on the discussions from the College seminar in February 2025. In his view, this mid-term review was a first step towards creating the conditions for the modernisation of cohesion programmes. This approach remained voluntary, as each region remained free to adjust its programmes based on its local reality and the incentives proposed, in line with the EU's broad guidelines.

Mr FITTO then presented the five new strategic priorities underpinning that day's proposals, namely (i) defence, (ii) competitiveness, (iii) affordable housing, (iv) water resilience and (v) energy transition.

With regard to defence, he explained that cohesion policy would now be able to support companies in the sector, with a particular focus on eastern border regions,

which faced the dual challenge of increasing their security while revitalising their economies.

In terms of competitiveness, the review would allow Member States and regions to step up their investments in strategic technologies.

On affordable housing, Mr FITTO stressed the need to close the investment gap and proposed doubling cohesion policy funding in this area, which affected 75% of European citizens living in urban areas.

With regard to water resilience, he warned of the increasing impact of climate change, with devastating droughts and floods representing two sides of the same problem. He announced that Member States would be able to increase investments in water resilience, including the digitisation of water infrastructure.

Finally, as regards the energy transition, the proposals focused on accelerating the development of energy interconnectors and charging infrastructure.

Mr FITTO then detailed the financial incentives and administrative simplification planned to accompany these priorities. Investments in the five strategic areas would benefit from a pre-financing rate of 30% and an EU co-financing rate of up to 100%. In addition, programmes allocating more than 15% of their overall funds to these priorities would receive an additional pre-financing of 5%, i.e. ten times the level currently in force. For eastern border regions, this rate would be increased to 10%.

In response to stakeholders' expectations regarding flexibility and simplification, the proposal for a Regulation included simplifying the use of the Just Transition Fund. It also provided for a one-year extension of the eligibility period, until 2030, for programmes allocating at least 15% of their funds to the strategic priorities.

In conclusion, Mr FITTO stressed the dual goal of this review, which was to optimise existing programmes while preparing for future discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). He called for a balanced approach,

stressing that while cohesion policy was a fundamental pillar of the EU enshrined in the Treaties, it could not remain static. On the contrary, this policy must evolve, modernise and integrate new European priorities. He pointed out that cohesion policy was often the only tangible link between the EU and its citizens, thus offering an opportunity to strengthen trust.

Finally, Mr FITTO drew attention to the need to improve communication. Despite the budgetary importance of cohesion policy, which accounted for one third of the EU budget, it remained largely unknown to citizens, both in Brussels and in the Member States. The communication strategy should be more ambitious, creating a direct and visible link with European citizens.

Ms MÎNZATU stated that, in spite of being one of the oldest and most respected EU policies, cohesion policy was in danger of being taken for granted. She therefore expressed her firm support for the modernisation proposals, including those on the Just Transition Fund.

She stressed the pivotal role of the European Social Fund + (ESF+), which, alongside Erasmus+, was one of the EU's two main investment instruments which benefited citizens directly. Financial incentives comparable to those proposed under cohesion policy were also provided for under the ESF+ to support the reskilling and upskilling of workers in strategic sectors, in particular defence.

Ms MÎNZATU noted that the mid-term review of the ESF+ gave the Member States the chance to reprogramme their resources to enable a broader deployment of the tools resulting from the Union of Skills, particularly the Skills Guarantee. This could also be extended beyond the pilot projects run by the Commission to support the transition between professions in a more systematic way.

Reacting to possible concerns about the use of cohesion funds for defence, she underlined that the primary objective was job creation and pointed out that it was up to the EU to direct cohesion policy towards the creation of jobs, skills and

prosperity by integrating the security dimension and enhancing the economic benefits.

Ms MÎNZATU added that the Commission was called upon to adopt on the same day, by written procedure, an amendment to the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) aimed at broadening its scope. This would enable the EGF to intervene in a preventive way by supporting companies undergoing restructuring rather than simply compensating workers after they had been dismissed, as was the case in the past.

She concluded by conveying a message from Ms RIBERA, who was not present that day, highlighting the need to maintain decarbonisation ambitions in cohesion policy, and she reiterated that the climate targets and developing the competences needed for the green and digital transitions remained clear and consistent priorities.

The PRESIDENT returned to the success of the communication strategy deployed under *NextGenerationEU*, stating that the official signing of the agreements in the Member States had received national media coverage which affirmed the European dimension of the financial contributions granted. She considered that this approach might inspire communication about cohesion policy.

She noted that environmental challenges were central to the mid-term review and that integrating energy networks and interconnections were among the priorities and were crucial in achieving the aims of the Green Deal.

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

- the need to adapt cohesion policy to the development of the geopolitical context by integrating emerging priorities such as security and defence while preserving its central aim of convergence and the reduction of regional disparities;

- the importance of guaranteeing that the Member States had sufficient flexibility in reprogramming funds so that they could react swiftly and effectively to common challenges, particularly in the most exposed regions such as those at the eastern borders;
- the need for increased investment in infrastructure, particularly in order to support implementation of the Green Deal, boost energy independence and meet the increasing demand for connectivity, electrification and energy storage;
- the importance of targeted support in priority areas such as affordable housing, military mobility and dual-use infrastructure while remaining within cohesion policy's scope of intervention, including in defence matters;
- the strategic link of this mid-term review with the upcoming negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework and the need for full transparency about the budgetary implications of the proposals being made;
- the need to maintain a coherent, pragmatic approach in supporting the Member States through partnership agreements;
- the importance of maintaining guarantees concerning fundamental values while ensuring a fair balance between flexibility and rigour in the application of conditionalities;
- concerns about the low expenditure implementation rate for the current financial year, possibly linked to the complexity of the system, and hopes for a significant improvement in the coming months;
- the potential for that day's proposals to stimulate investment and reinforce economic competitiveness;
- the importance of giving greater visibility to EU-funded projects.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

- approved the Communication in COM(2025) 163/3 for transmission to the European Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 123/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments;
- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 164/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

**12. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2019/631 TO INCLUDE AN ADDITIONAL FLEXIBILITY AS REGARDS THE CALCULATION OF MANUFACTURERS' COMPLIANCE WITH CO₂ EMISSION PERFORMANCE STANDARDS FOR NEW PASSENGER CARS AND NEW LIGHT COMMERCIAL VEHICLES FOR THE CALENDAR YEARS 2025 TO 2027
(COM(2025) 136 TO /5)**

The PRESIDENT asked Mr HOEKSTRA to present to the College the proposal for a Regulation aimed at increasing flexibility in the application of CO₂ emission standards for new light vehicles for the period from 2025 to 2027.

Mr HOEKSTRA explained that the proposal was in line with the agreement of 5 March 2025 on the industrial action plan for the automotive sector, which aimed to reinforce the global competitiveness of the European automotive industry. The agreement provided for a commitment to increased flexibility regarding short-term CO₂ emission targets. He also stressed the importance of creating favourable

conditions and developing the infrastructure needed to support the transition in the coming years.

The agreement provided for a subsequent revision of the CO₂ emission targets for 2035, with calls for increased ambitions from some quarters and for a more prudent, predictable approach from others. The proposed Regulation thus responded effectively to the immediate need for flexibility while paving the way for a re-examination and a future constructive dialogue on the objectives for 2035.

Following the presentation, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 136/5 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

EU-US TRADE RELATIONS

The PRESIDENT and Mr ŠEFČOVIČ reported to the Commission on the ongoing exchanges between the EU and the United States concerning trade and tariffs.

The Commission took note of this information.

*

* *

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

*

* *

The meeting closed at 15.13.