



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2025) 2527 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Strasbourg, 8 July 2025

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2527th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 28 May 2025

(morning)

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PV(2025) 2527 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Wednesday 28 May 2025 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.03 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair. Ms RIBERA chaired the meeting from point 11 (in part).

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Ms RIBERA	Executive Vice-President	
Ms VIRKKUNEN	Executive Vice-President	
Mr SÉJOURNÉ	Executive Vice-President	
Ms KALLAS	High Representative /Vice-President	
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President	
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member	Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member	Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Mr KUBILIUS	Member	Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Ms KOS	Member	
Mr SÍKELA	Member	
Mr KADIS	Member	
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member	
Ms LAHBIB	Member	
Mr BRUNNER	Member	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Ms ROSWALL	Member	
Mr SERAFIN	Member	
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member	
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member	Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Mr McGRATH	Member	
Mr HANSEN	Member	
Mr MICALLEF	Member	

(28 May 2025)

Absent:

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member
Ms ŠUIČA	Member
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
M. LANDENBURGER	Deputy Director-General, Legal Service	Items 11 (in part) and 12
Ms SPINANT	Director-General, DG Communication	
Ms PINHO	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	Items 1 to 11 (in part)
Mr DE KEERSMAECKER	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	Items 11 (in part) and 12
Mr ADAM	Deputy Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr SMITH	Expert in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Item 11
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) 2527/FINAL; SEC(2025) 2527/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) 2527)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 26 May 2025.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2523rd, 2524th, 2525th and 2526th meetings of 16 April and of 6, 14 and 21 May 2025 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2025) 176)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on 23 May 2025 (RCC(2025) 176).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **European statistics on population and housing, amendment of Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 and repeal of Regulations (EC) No 763/2008 and (EU) No 1260/2013 (Regulation) – JOVEVA report – 2023/0008 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 143.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 1026/2012 on certain measures for the purpose of the conservation of fish stocks in relation to countries allowing non-sustainable fishing (Regulation) – BAJADA report – 2024/0224 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 144.

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

Line set out in SI(2025) 148.

- **Temporary derogation from certain provisions of Regulation (EU) 2017/2226 and Regulation (EU) 2016/399 as regards a progressive start of operations of the Entry/Exit System (Regulation) – KANKO report – 2024/0315 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 149.

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

Line set out in SI(2025) 150.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EC) No 261/2004 establishing common rules on compensation and assistance to passengers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights and Regulation (EC) No 2027/97 on air carrier liability in respect of the carriage of passengers and their baggage by air (Regulation) – NOVAKOV (ex-ARIAS ECHEVERRÍA & ex-BACH) report – 2013/0072 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 145.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Harmonising certain aspects of insolvency law (Directive) – RADEV (ex-ARIMONT) report – 2022/0408 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2025) 146.

- **Jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition and enforcement of measures and cooperation in matters relating to the protection of adults (Regulation) – TOOM report – 2023/0169 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2025) 147.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2025) 218)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2025) 218 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 21 May 2025.

6. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF EUROPEAN UNION LAW

STATE AID AND OTHER COMPETITION RULES

The Commission's decisions on this item are recorded in the special minutes.

7. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

7.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2025) 140 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 19 and 25 May 2025.

7.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2025) 141 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 19 and 25 May 2025.

7.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2025) 142 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 19 and 25 May 2025 archived in Decide.

7.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED
(SEC(2025) 143 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 26 and 28 May 2025.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2025) 144)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2025) 54)

During the meeting, Mr SERAFIN presented two additional proposals for administrative decisions, which were submitted directly to the College for adoption.

It was proposed to appoint Ms Elisabeth WERNER as Director-General of DG Agriculture and Rural Development, with effect from 1 June 2025. It was also

proposed to the College to approve the shortlist of suitably qualified candidates for the post of Director-General of the European Anti-Fraud Office.

**8.1. DG AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT – APPOINTMENT
OF A DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT GRADE AD16
(PERS(2025) 29 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director-General of DG Agriculture and Rural Development (PERS(2025) 29).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 2 and 27 May 2025 (PERS(2025) 29/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Ms Elisabeth WERNER to the post.

This decision would take effect on 1 June 2025.

**8.2. EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE – ADOPTION OF A SHORTLIST
OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL AT
GRADE AD15
(PERS(2024) 61 TO /3)**

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

- to approve the preselection list set out in point (2) of PERS(2025) 54, made up of four duly qualified candidates, presented in alphabetical order, for the post of Director-General of the European Anti-Fraud Office, and to consider this preselection as the Commission proposal;

- to ask the Secretary-General of the Commission to communicate this decision to the European Parliament, the Council and the Supervisory Committee of the European Anti-Fraud Office, in order to launch the next steps of the procedure, in accordance with Article 17(2) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**9. JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – THE EUROPEAN UNION’S STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE BLACK SEA REGION
(JOIN(2025) 135 TO /3; RCC(2025) 36)**

The PRESIDENT thanked the Members of the College who had contributed to drawing up the European strategy for a safer, more prosperous and more resilient Black Sea region. During her recent visit to Asia for the EU-Central Asia Summit, countries in the region had shown keen interest in the strategy, which they viewed as a direct means of forging a closer relationship with Europe.

Ms KALLAS felt that the strategic approach being proposed reflected the EU’s willingness to make the Black Sea region a political priority. She highlighted the major geostrategic potential of the region, both as a bridge between Europe and Asia and as a key enabler of EU support for Ukraine, making it possible to give Ukraine security guarantees in the maritime area and help with its economic recovery.

She stressed the need for a new approach that addressed the aspirations of countries in the region, whether they were moving towards accession or seeking closer alignment with the EU, and also met the objectives set out in the EU-Central Asia Connectivity Agenda, as discussed at the recent regional summit.

The strategy being presented was therefore structured around three strands:

(i) enhancing security and stability, (ii) fostering sustainable growth and prosperity, and (iii) boosting resilience and preparedness.

In that connection, Ms KALLAS highlighted the three flagship initiatives, namely establishing a Black Sea maritime security hub, implementing a specific connectivity agenda focusing on the expansion of trans-European networks, and improving the preparedness of coastal communities and blue economy sectors. In her view, for all these aspects, especially preparedness, it would be important to step up cooperation and increase the exchange of best practice between the Black Sea and Baltic Sea regions.

While the most urgent needs related to security, work in that area needed to be part of a joined-up approach that incorporated prosperity and preparedness, in particular by developing infrastructure connecting Europe and Central Asia via the South Caucasus. She stressed how important it was for countries in the region to take ownership of the strategy and voluntarily engage in this process that was based on shared values and the generation of mutual benefits.

Ms KALLAS concluded by saying that she was planning to organise a ministerial meeting on a larger scale than usual, in the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council on 15 July, in order to cover the whole strategy and connectivity agenda, to be attended by all the parties concerned.

For her part, Ms KOS stressed that it was important for the EU to build strategic partnerships with third countries that could eventually become valuable allies. She highlighted the central role of these partnerships in bolstering the EU's strategic independence, in particular in the areas of defence, connectivity and preparedness. These relations also helped to foster dialogue and enhance the appeal of the EU. In that connection, she called for greater cooperation between Asia and Europe through the southern Black Sea, capitalising on existing supply chains and trade flows. She pointed out that the EU was the leading trading partner of the Black Sea countries and the second largest for countries in Central Asia.

The EU's strategic approach sought to unlock the region's full potential based on peace efforts, respect for the international order and adherence to the rule of law and international law. Support to bolster Ukraine's overall resilience and security, as well as its reconstruction, when conditions allowed, was at the heart of the policy.

The strategy being presented that day would also drive sustainable development and enhance economic prosperity with transport, energy, digital and trade corridors connecting the Black Sea region to the Baltic Sea and the Mediterranean and, through the South Caucasus, to the Caspian Sea and Central Asia.

Moreover, since the Black Sea region was particularly vulnerable to natural and man-made disasters as well as climate change, the strategy would promote environmental protection, strengthen climate-change preparedness and adaptation, attract investment and identify priorities and the resources that would be needed, in line with the Global Gateway strategy and using a Team Europe approach.

Ms KOS concluded her presentation by noting that Türkiye would be a key partner for stability and peace in the region, as would Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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

- the strategic importance of the Black Sea region, now more than ever, particularly in terms of security and trade;
- the historical role of certain players in the region, in particular Türkiye, which controlled the Bosphorus Strait and the Dardanelles Strait, connecting the Black Sea to the Sea of Marmara and the Aegean, and Russia, which regarded the region as a maritime entry point to the Mediterranean;
- the political significance of this strategy, particularly for the EU's eastern border, and its importance for the EU's strategic autonomy;

- the need for the EU to step up its involvement with regard to the region's infrastructure, inland waterways and civilian and military mobility;
- the key aspect of threat preparedness and a call to identify specific sources of funding;
- the proposal to draw up annual reports to assess progress, as part of the Union of Skills, for example;
- the value of this strategic approach, which could serve as a model for other regions or with other partners;
- the importance of partnerships as a means of diversifying sources of energy supply, with the expectation that this would have a positive impact on the EU's internal and external strategies;
- the need for Europe to step up efforts to support regional connectivity and the protection of critical infrastructure, as well as recognition of the region's central maritime role, especially as a grain corridor, meaning that coordinated demining would eventually be required.

In response to the various points raised, Ms KALLAS concluded by stressing that, given the growing influence of regional powers, the EU had to demonstrate that, in Central Asia and the Caucasus, it stood shoulder to shoulder with these countries and that, as a partner, it represented the most reliable path to ensuring the prosperity and well-being of the people living there.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Joint Communication in JOIN(2025) 135/3 for transmission to the European Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

10. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2021/947 AS REGARDS INCREASED EFFICIENCY OF THE EXTERNAL ACTION GUARANTEE

(COM(2025) 262 AND /2; SWD(2025) 262 AND /2; RCC(2025) 39 AND /2)

The PRESIDENT asked Ms KALLAS and Mr SÍKELA to present the proposal for a Regulation aimed at increasing the capacity for action and efficiency of the External Action Guarantee.

Ms KALLAS explained that the External Action Guarantee was a key financial instrument of the Global Gateway strategy, enabling more affordable loans to be offered in order to mobilise investments in partner countries around the world. Although technical in nature, the proposal had a strategic scope and sent a strong political message, illustrating the Commission's willingness to make full use of the margins of the current budgetary framework and to maximise the impact of its external action instruments.

The time had come to reaffirm the EU's credibility and reliability as a global partner; the EU and its Member States were the world's largest donor, contributing 42% of official development aid whilst accounting for only 16% of global GDP.

Against the backdrop of significant reduction in aid from the US, Ms KALLAS noted that the international community's expectations of Europe were growing. As the EU alone could not fill the deficit, a more strategic use of European resources was needed, with an approach based on the three principles of flexibility, impact and simplicity.

She concluded by calling for a spirit of unity to be maintained in the face of future critical needs, and hoped that the proposal could rapidly be adopted by the co-legislators, ideally before 2026.

Mr SÍKELA highlighted the major challenges facing Europe, from the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine to climate change, challenges which required substantial funding. As a result of increasing needs, the resources available for the EU's external action were becoming scarce.

He stressed the need to adapt the European response, using existing resources more efficiently, setting clear priorities, and acting strategically. The proposal made that day was aimed at simplifying the External Action Guarantee, particularly in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and other partners, to maximise the geopolitical and economic impact of the EU's budgetary investments.

The proposal was also aimed at mobilising the residual budget of the two European Funds for Sustainable Development (EFSD and EFSD+), and at establishing an operational link between these two funds, enabling reallocations between them thanks to more flexible rules. This approach could free up around EUR 470 million for use until the end of 2027.

The proposal also made provision for reducing the EU's risk coverage for EIB sovereign loans from 65% to 60%, thus creating additional room for manoeuvre for investments.

Furthermore, the proposal introduced several non-legislative simplification measures to enable the EU's partners responsible for implementation, such as the EIB and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), to work more effectively by streamlining procedures. These simplification measures included consolidating and streamlining reporting requirements, changing the frequency of financial reporting from quarterly to half-yearly, concluding a single contribution agreement per partner for several technical assistance measures, and simplifying blended financing processes, in particular in cooperation with the EIB, in order to speed up project schedules. These simplifications were aimed at cutting red tape, improving access to finance, and accelerating the deployment of

development projects, whilst generating savings estimated at EUR 21.5 million for partners.

Mr SÍKELA concluded that this reform would make the EU's external action simpler, faster and more effective on the ground where it was essential.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS noted that this was a new contribution to the current Commission's simplification agenda. He emphasised the essential nature of the proposal presented that day for simplifying the EU's investments globally whilst optimising the use of existing resources. Reducing the administrative burden and reporting requirements would benefit not only the partners responsible for implementing the funds, but also the final recipients. The proposal ought to enable savings of EUR 21.5 million to be made for the partners concerned, on top of more than EUR 8 billion of broader simplification measures already taken that year.

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

- the College's strong support for the proposal and its objectives, in particular with reference to the ongoing simplification agenda;
- recognition of the fact that this was a step towards streamlining processes and optimising the use of EU budgetary resources;
- the tangible benefits expected for the final beneficiaries, thanks in particular to a reduction in the administrative burden for partners responsible for implementation, and the resulting substantial savings;
- the need to better develop and publicise the impact of the EU's external action and the scale of European contributions to development aid, which went far beyond those of other international players;
- clarification that the proposal was aimed at increasing flexibility by mobilising unused guarantees from previous multiannual financial frameworks, thereby

making it possible to respond more quickly to urgent needs, whether or not they fell within the scope of external action, including under the Global Gateway initiative.

Following the discussion, the PRESIDENT stressed the need to increase the EU's visibility as the world's largest donor of development aid. The Global Gateway initiative, initially launched within the framework of the G7 and the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII), had established itself as a credible and recognised brand globally. She emphasised the importance of maintaining this momentum, particularly by better promoting tangible results on the ground, while the EU remained one of the few players consistently engaged in supporting global development.

Following these presentations, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2025) 262/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council and the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2025) 262/2, the contents of which were noted.

11. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – THE EU STARTUP AND SCALEUP STRATEGY – CHOOSE EUROPE TO START AND SCALE

(COM(2025) 270 TO /3; SWD(2025) 138 AND /2; RCC(2025) 37)

The PRESIDENT introduced the EU strategy for start-ups and scale-ups, highlighting that it aimed to facilitate the large-scale development of innovative companies within the EU, thereby strengthening European competitiveness.

Mr SÉJOURNÉ pointed to the statistics that justified this initiative. Only 8% of global scale-ups were currently established in Europe and, over the last 15 years,

almost 30% of European unicorns had been relocated outside the EU. He also noted that the strategy was in line with the recommendations in Mr Draghi's report on the future of European competitiveness, and aimed to enable businesses founded in Europe to grow on the European continent.

Ms ZAHARIEVA mentioned the initiatives carried out by the Commission during this mandate, which had paved the way for the development of this strategy: the Competitiveness Compass, the Savings and Investment Union and the Single Market Strategy. She thanked all the Commission departments who had provided their expertise in the working group on start-ups and scale-ups that had been set up last January.

She stressed that these companies were a key priority of this mandate, and that that day's strategy met political expectations in terms of ambition. In this regard, she pointed out that European innovators not only created businesses, but also created jobs, offered concrete solutions to citizens' needs, strengthened competitiveness and ultimately contributed to the prosperity of the EU. The strategy embodied the vision of a Europe capable of becoming a true start-up continent, retaining its talents and attracting investors from all over the world, building on the strengths of the single market, simplifying rules and promoting a dynamic culture of innovation.

Ms ZAHARIEVA then presented the five main pillars of the strategy, the first of which concerned the introduction of innovation-friendly regulation. She pointed out that start-ups and scale-ups thrived in an environment with limited administrative burdens and fragmentation, which was one of the main objectives of the ongoing simplification efforts. With that in mind, the strategy called for the establishment of a 28th legal regime for European companies that would simplify the formation and cross-border expansion of start-ups thanks to a set of simple, harmonised and digital-by-default rules. Another key initiative in this area was the adoption of a future European Innovation Act, which would support the use of tools such as regulatory sandboxes or pre-commercial procurement.

The second pillar of the strategy focused on improving access to the financing that start-ups and scale-ups required. Ms ZAHARIEVA stressed the close link between this pillar and the Savings and Investment Union, which was essential in order to mobilise resources on a large scale. In this regard, she announced the enlargement and simplification of the European Innovation Council, one of the largest high-tech venture capital funds, which could mobilise up to EUR 20 billion for start-ups by 2027.

The strategy also proposed a new European Scale-up Fund, which would have an investment capacity of more than EUR 30 million of direct equity investment in technology companies. Ms ZAHARIEVA pointed out that the Fund would serve two functions. On the one hand, it would ensure that promising start-ups could grow in the EU, strengthening European technological sovereignty and economic security. On the other hand, it would be based on market mechanisms to attract private investors and fund managers. It would complement existing instruments, such as the activities of the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF), which would continue to invest according to a ‘fund of funds’ strategy rather than through direct equity investments.

The third pillar aimed to strengthen the uptake of innovative solutions and market expansion. Ms ZAHARIEVA stressed the importance of leveraging demand, both public and private, to support the growth of start-ups. The strategy thus placed particular emphasis on promoting innovation-friendly public procurement, in particular in the defence sector, which had been identified as a driver in view of future investments. The private sector was also encouraged to become more engaged, including through investments, acquisitions and partnerships with European start-ups and scale-ups. The strategy also provided support for the development of research, helping universities and inventors to protect intellectual property and expand their business activities more quickly.

The fourth pillar of the strategy concerned the attraction and retention of talent. Ms ZAHARIEVA pointed out that start-ups and scale-ups needed better access to

highly skilled labour. In the framework of the Skills Union, the strategy aimed to develop talent ‘Made in Europe’, strengthening the entrepreneurial skills of young Europeans. In addition, the Blue Carpet initiative would involve the streamlining of visa procedures in order to attract the best international talent.

The fifth and final pillar concerned access to infrastructure, networks and services. In this regard, a new charter for access to infrastructure for industrial users would enable innovative companies to benefit from state-of-the-art European facilities, including in the area of supercomputers and artificial intelligence. This initiative would be developed through the upcoming strategies on the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in science.

Lastly, Ms ZAHARIEVA pointed out that the implementation of the strategy would be closely monitored, in particular by means of a dashboard of performance indicators. She called on all Members of the Commission to support efforts to engage in dialogue with Member States and European communities of innovators, in order to ensure the success of this initiative.

Concluding the presentations, the PRESIDENT stressed the geopolitical opportunity this presented for Europe to create an enabling environment for research, start-ups and scale-ups, and stressed the importance of measuring progress in the implementation of initiatives through the use of tangible indicators. She pointed out that communication with companies had already started through sectoral policy dialogues, which needed to continue with the widespread involvement of the Members of the Commission.

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

- full support for the proposed strategy;

- the urgent need to reduce fragmentation of the single market, in particular by introducing a 28th legal regime for European businesses, and the forthcoming dedicated public consultation that the Commission would launch;
- the need to ensure consistency between the new European Scale-up Fund and other existing European initiatives and instruments;
- the need to improve access to the single market for innovative products and to speed up authorisation procedures;
- the need to boost large-scale cross-border investments in start-ups and scale-ups, and the central role of the Savings and Investments Union in this regard;
- the importance of active communication and stronger engagement by the Commission with innovative companies, for example through the organisation of a ‘Scale-up Summit’;
- the need to also reduce regulatory fragmentation affecting cross-border workers, in particular through the package on fair labour mobility that was currently being prepared;
- the strategy’s focus on the social economy, the development of entrepreneurial skills and gender equality, in particular to improve access to finance for female start-up founders;
- the modernisation of the European space and defence industry, and the importance of accelerating public procurement, similar to the practices already implemented in Ukraine in the context of the Russian war of aggression.

In response to certain points raised during the discussion, Ms ZAHARIEVA stressed the importance of the State aid rules, as well as of continued dialogue between the Commission and the national authorities, in order to ensure the success of the strategy. She explained that the new European Scale-up Fund was being proposed as a short-term initiative, in order to meet the immediate financing needs

of innovative scale-ups, pending the full implementation of the Savings and Investments Union. Consequently, she stressed the importance of designing the Fund in close cooperation with all the relevant Commission departments.

Ms ZAHARIEVA also emphasised the importance of preserving the European social model, in particular through the simplification measures planned for teleworking and the treatment of employee share options. She stressed the need to speed up licensing procedures, for example by using regulatory sandboxes, thus allowing European innovators to test their products in a secure environment in the single market. Finally, she emphasised that there was a need to help startup founders boost the positive perception of their activities in European society.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2025) 270/3 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, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2025) 270/3, the contents of which were noted.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Ms RIBERA asked Ms KALLAS to present to the College the latest developments in the EU's external relations.

Ms KALLAS began by thanking the Members of the Commission who had taken part in the third ministerial meeting between the European Union and the African Union, held in Brussels on 21 May. She welcomed the remarkable level of participation, which reflected the vitality of the partnership and a shared commitment to forging closer relations.

She then referred to her second tour of the Western Balkans, during which she

visited Serbia, Kosovo and North Macedonia. As regards the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo, she noted that while 90% of the agreements had been concluded, only one third had been fully implemented. The process was suspended, in particular pending the formation of a new government in Pristina. She stressed the importance of boosting support for the process, especially among the younger generations.

As regards the situation in Ukraine, Ms KALLAS noted that Russian attacks had intensified, carried out on several fronts and deliberately targeting the civilian population. In this connection, she called for clear and constant support for Ukraine and pointed out that work was ongoing on a new sanctions package, to be activated in the absence of an unconditional ceasefire. She also stressed the importance of close coordination with the United States to increase pressure on Moscow. Finally, she welcomed the recent exchange of prisoners of war, which was a long-awaited step forward.

On the Middle East, Ms KALLAS reported on the exchanges that took place at the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 May. A majority of Member States had called for a review of Israel's compliance with Article 2 of the Association Agreement concerning respect for human rights and democratic principles. This review would continue at the next Council in June on the basis of existing reports.

She also expressed deep concern at the humanitarian situation in Gaza, deploring the persistent obstacles that hampered the delivery of aid. She stressed the need to preserve the role of UN agencies, as stakeholders with a structured intervention framework.

Ms KALLAS also referred to Syria, recalling that the ministers had endorsed the lifting of general economic sanctions at the Foreign Affairs Council on 20 May, while maintaining sanctions against the Assad regime and security-based measures. This was a signal in favour of broader economic stabilisation, which could have a positive effect on the situation in the country.

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

- the need to increase the visibility of the EU’s external action against a background of growing disinformation and the withdrawal of international partners;
- the interest in this context of strategic cooperation with sporting organisations such as the Confederation of African Football, enabling young generations to be reached while promoting European values;
- the importance however of including such an initiative in a strategic approach consistent with the Union’s development priorities and objectives, and of strengthening coordination between the services concerned, in particular with actions carried out on the ground by the EU delegations;
- persistent concerns, particularly at the May European Humanitarian Forum, about the humanitarian situation in Gaza, marked by violations of international humanitarian law, repeated obstacles hampering the delivery of aid and increasing weaponisation of the humanitarian system;
- support for the decision to initiate a review of the Association Agreement with Israel pursuant to Article 2 thereof, which was seen as a strong political signal, and the need to examine the possible consequences, particularly in the areas of trade and cooperation;
- the proposal to hold a debate within the College on the EU’s strategy in the region, going beyond the purely geopolitical or humanitarian dimensions;
- the worrying situation of European students and researchers in the United States, in the context of recent tensions in some universities, and the review of support measures through existing instruments, such as Erasmus+ and the Choose Europe Initiative.

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 11.22.