



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2025) 2541 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 19 November 2025

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2541st meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Thursday 16 October 2025

(morning)

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Single sitting: Thursday 16 October 2025 (morning)

The sitting opened at 10.01 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	
Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President	
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President	
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Ms ŠUICA	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	Items 1 to 10 (in part)
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member	
Mr KUBILIUS	Member	
Ms KOS	Member	
Mr KADIS	Member	
Ms LAHBIB	Member	
Mr BRUNNER	Member	
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member	
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr McGRATH	Member	
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member	
Mr HANSEN	Member	
Mr MICALLEF	Member	Items 1 to 10 (in part)

Absent:

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member
Mr SÍKELA	Member
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member
Ms ROSWALL	Member
Mr SERAFIN	Member

The following also sat in:

Mr HAZEKAMP	Chair of the European Fiscal Board	Item 1
Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms SPINANT	Director-General, DG Communication	
Ms PINHO	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Mr ADAM	Deputy Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr MORDUE	Diplomatic Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	Items 9 to 11
Ms HILI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Ms SEMLALI	Policy Assistant in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr LARCH	Head of the Secretariat of the European Fiscal Board	Point 1
Mr CHARLES	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	
Mr TAQUET-GRAZIANI	Acting Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	

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

1. EUROPEAN FISCAL BOARD 2025 REPORT

The PRESIDENT welcomed Mr Pieter Hasekamp, Chair of the European Fiscal Board, and invited him to present the conclusions of the 2025 report of this independent advisory body.

Mr Hasekamp thanked the College for the invitation to present the new Board's first annual report. The report analysed the 2024 budgetary surveillance cycle and the roll-out of the new economic governance framework in 2025.

He began by presenting the key messages of the report, noting first that most Member States had not used the phasing out of energy subsidies and revenue windfalls to reduce expenditure growth in 2024. He also drew attention to some shortcomings in terms of transparency, and called for the planning phase of the new fiscal framework to be made less opaque for the various stakeholders. Additionally, he mentioned that there was uncertainty in relation to key operational elements of the reformed economic governance framework, and stressed the Board's recommendation to swiftly finalise the new Code of Conduct of the Stability and Growth Pact.

He also expressed the Board's concerns over the growing trend of Member States to build their medium-term fiscal structural plans on forecasts that were more optimistic than those underpinning the Commission's baseline scenarios. He called on the Commission to return to the previous practice of assessing these forecasts in detailed country reports.

As regards excessive deficit procedures, Mr Hasekamp noted that, in practice, the opening of procedures had been postponed pending Member States' medium-term plans, and he called for faster implementation in the future. Finally, he observed the limited involvement of national independent fiscal institutions and stressed the importance of robust independent assessments of Member States' budgets.

Mr Hasekamp then discussed the macroeconomic and fiscal situation in 2024. Economic activity had picked up, with real GDP growing by 1% in the euro area and across the EU, with record low unemployment. However, although headline deficits had improved slightly, fiscal developments in 2024 masked worrying trends, including increases in net expenditure exceeding medium-term nominal potential growth. Furthermore, deviations from the Council's recommendations remained inconsequential.

As regards the roll-out of the revised economic governance framework, Mr Hasekamp explained that it had been done in a somewhat rushed and fragmented manner. Already tight deadlines had been shortened further by late submissions of some national plans. Moreover, stakeholders had been kept in the dark during the drafting of Member States' medium-term plans. He added that the new legal framework contained less operational detail and that certain key elements should be included as soon as possible in the revised Code of Conduct, so that rules could be implemented in a predictable and even-handed manner.

Lastly, as regards the budgetary surveillance process, he noted a growing tendency towards bilateralism at the expense of the multilateral scrutiny in the Council provided for in the Treaty. Furthermore, bilateral exchanges between the Commission and the Member States had often paved the way for a somewhat indulgent approach to optimistic medium-term assumptions to justify higher expenditure growth. This trend was accompanied by the limited involvement of independent fiscal institutions, which could play a useful role through external checks.

In response to requests for clarification following his presentation, Mr Hasekamp explained that there was increasing bilateralism in the negotiations between the Commission and the Member States when the latter were drawing up their national fiscal plans. While the process itself did not raise concerns, he noticed a trend towards pre-empting certain conclusions which should be drawn in the multilateral context of the Council.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr Hasekamp for his insightful presentation of the conclusions of the 2025 report of the European Fiscal Board.

2. AGENDAS

(OJ(2025) 2541/FINAL; SEC(2025) 2541/FINAL)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

3. WEEKLY MEETING OF HEADS OF CABINET

(RCC(2025) 2541)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 13 October 2025.

4. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2536th, 2537th, 2538th, 2539th and 2540th meetings of 3, 9, 17 and 30 September and 7 October 2025 until a later meeting.

5. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2025) 196)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on Thursday 9 October 2025 (RCC(2025) 196).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **European Defence Industry Programme (EDIP) and framework of measures to ensure the timely availability and supply of defence products – GLUCKSMANN & BELLAMY (ex-BELLAMY) report – 2024/0061 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 309.

- **Cooperation among enforcement authorities responsible for the enforcement of Directive (EU) 2019/633 on unfair trading practices in business-to-business relationships in the agricultural and food supply chain (Regulation) – BONACCINI report – 2024/0318 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 299/2.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 as regards the conditionality system, types of intervention in the form of direct payment, types of intervention in certain sectors and rural development and annual performance reports, and Regulation (EU) 2021/2116 as regards data and interoperability governance, suspensions of payments annual performance clearance and controls and penalties (Regulation) – RODRIGUES report – 2025/0236 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 300.

- **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) / Amendment of Regulations (EC) No 261/2004, (EC) No 1107/2006, (EU) No 1177/2010, (EU) No 181/2011 and (EU) 2021/782 as regards enforcement of passenger rights in the Union (Regulation) – RICCI (ex-VARIATI) report – 2023/0437 (COD) / Passenger**

rights in the context of multimodal journeys (Regulation) – GIESEKE report – 2023/0436 (COD)

Line set out in SI(2025) 307.

- **Circularity requirements for vehicle design and management of end-of-life vehicles, amendment of Regulations (EU) 2018/858 and 2019/1020 and repeal of Directives 2000/53/EC and 2005/64/EC (Regulation) – GIESEKE & SAUDARGAS (ex-GIESEKE) report – 2023/0284 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 303/2.

- **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) 304.

- **Establishment of the Union Customs Code and the European Union Customs Authority, and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 (Regulation) – GOTINK (ex-CLUNE) report – 2023/0156 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2025) 305.

- **2023 discharge: general budget of the EU – European Council and Council – BRUDZIŃSKI report – 2024/2021 (DEC)**

Line set out in SP(2025) 346.

- **2023 discharge: general budget of the EU – Agencies – European Union Agency for Asylum – MARQUARDT report – 2024/2030 (DEC)**

Line set out in SP(2025) 347.

- **EU position for the negotiations with the United Kingdom on cooperation in the areas of development and of international disaster and humanitarian**

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Line set out in SI(2025) 306.

The Commission took note of the following point:

- **Annual Progress Reports on Simplification, Implementation and Enforcement – High Representative/Vice-President KALLAS**

Information set out in SPI(2025) 71.

**6. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2025) 232)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2025) 232 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 8 October 2025.

7. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**7.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2025) 270 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 6 and 12 October 2025.

**7.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2025) 271 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 6 and 12 October 2025.

7.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2025) 272 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 6 and 12 October 2025 archived in Decide.

7.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED
(SEC(2025) 273 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 13 and 17 October 2025.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2025) 274/3)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2025) 80/3)

8.1. DG RESEARCH AND INNOVATION – APPOINTMENT OF A
PRINCIPAL ADVISER AT GRADE AD14
(PERS(2025) 81 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 / Director of the European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency at the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (PERS(2025) 81).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 1 and 25 September 2025 (PERS(2025) 81/2).

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 Ms ZAHARIEVA, it then decided to appoint Mr Momchil SABEV to the post.

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

**8.2. DG COMPETITION – APPOINTMENT OF A CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER AT GRADE AD14
(PERS(2025) 44 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 2(a) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union for the post of Director and Chief Technology Officer at the Directorate-General for Competition (PERS(2025) 44 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 30 July and 4 September 2025 (PERS(2025) 44/3).

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 Ms RIBERA, it then decided to appoint Mr Yves-Alexandre DE MONTJOYE to the post and to recruit him as a member of the temporary staff at grade AD14 for a period of three years, renewable once for a maximum of two years.

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

8.3. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – EXTENSION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF AN AD15 PRINCIPAL ADVISER

The Commission took note of the information in point 3 of PERS(2025) 80/3 and, on a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided to extend the term of office of Ms Flaminia BUSSACCHINI as 'Mediator of the Commission' Principal Adviser at the Secretariat-General, with effect from 1 December 2025 until 30 November 2030.

This decision would take effect immediately.

8.4. *LEGAL SERVICE – APPOINTMENT OF A PRINCIPAL LEGAL ADVISER AT GRADE AD14*
(PERS(2025) 82 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 Legal Adviser responsible for the ‘LEG Team (Quality of Legislation)’ at the Legal Service (PERS(2025) 82).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 4 November 2024 and 13 February 2025 (PERS(2025) 82/2).

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 Mr Tibor SCHARF to the post.

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

8.5. *DG COMMUNICATION – APPOINTMENT OF A HEAD OF A EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPRESENTATION*

The Commission took note of the decision taken by the Appointing Authority to appoint Mr Peter STANO to the post of Head of the European Commission’s Representation in Bratislava, Slovakia.

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

9. *JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL: PRESERVING PEACE - DEFENCE READINESS ROADMAP 2030*
(JOIN(2025) 27 AND /3; RCC(2025) 97)

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The PRESIDENT introduced the EU's Defence Readiness Roadmap by stressing the speed with which the geopolitical situation was evolving and the need for the EU to accelerate its efforts. Following the White Paper on Defence from March 2025 and the conclusions of the June European Council calling for follow-up, a policy document had been submitted to the Heads of State and Government at the informal European Council on 1 October. The roadmap presented that day translated that policy document and the contributions of European leaders into tangible actions.

Defence capability gaps needed to be rapidly closed through targeted and joint investments, in close coordination with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). The PRESIDENT also stressed the importance of the European defence industry changing scale and pace. In her view, the example of Ukraine showed that a high level of production and innovation could be achieved in a short time. This dynamic must inspire European industry and stimulate its transformation, in order to preserve peace in Europe through an armed response capability that would serve as a deterrent.

Ms KALLAS, in turn, emphasised the need to make collective progress in the field of defence and to focus efforts on concrete projects that could bring real added value at EU level. She mentioned in particular the four flagship initiatives identified in the roadmap, namely the Eastern Flank Watch, the European Drone Defence Initiative, the European Air Shield and the European Space Shield, which reflected the nine priority capability areas identified in the White Paper.

She stressed the complementarity between EU and NATO actions, pointing out that the aim was not to duplicate existing structures, but to support Member States in fulfilling their commitments in terms of capabilities. Decision-making power must remain in the hands of the Member States, but fragmentation must be avoided while ensuring systems interoperability.

Ms KALLAS also highlighted the importance of joint approaches for the development of costly or complex capabilities and praised the role of the European Defence Agency in coordinating national efforts. A report on European defence readiness would now be submitted to the European Council annually in October to enable it to take stock of the progress made and give guidance for the next steps. Finally, she reminded the College of the importance of close cooperation with Ukraine, a key partner in strengthening the European defence technological and industrial base.

Ms VIRKKUNEN noted that the roadmap marked an important step in the implementation of the White Paper on Defence. The aim was to turn the strategic guidelines resulting from the mandate given by the European Council last June into tangible achievements, promoting a truly common approach between Member States.

She pointed out that the EU and its Member States were spending around EUR 400 billion on defence in 2025 and that it would be necessary to add some EUR 300 billion per year to fill the capability gaps identified. In this context, she stressed the importance of better coordinating the use of these resources at European level and of strengthening joint programmes, which still represented only a limited share of investment.

Ms VIRKKUNEN added that the flagship initiatives were a key lever for structuring this cooperation, in particular through the establishment by the Member States of capacity coalitions supported by the EU. She mentioned in particular the Eastern Flank Watch and the European Drone Defence Initiative, which she considered to be of key importance and closely linked.

Finally, thinking beyond the military field, she underlined the need for increased cooperation between police forces, public authorities and private actors, including companies managing critical infrastructure, to strengthen internal security and

resilience in the face of hybrid threats. In her view, European defence readiness also involved strengthening synergies between internal security and collective defence.

Mr KUBILIUS welcomed the ambitious contribution of the roadmap to achieving European defence readiness by 2030. He referred to the prospect of a genuine European defence dome, conceived as a strategic architecture aimed at strengthening the cohesion, accuracy and reaction speed of Europe's defence.

After an initial phase focused on establishing the necessary financial, legal and industrial conditions, in particular through the White Paper on European Defence and the accompanying initiatives, the proposed roadmap marked the transition to practical and effective implementation. To this end, it set deadlines, targets and monitoring obligations to fully mobilise Member States and EU institutions.

Mr KUBILIUS said that, between now and 2035, Member States would have to invest hundreds of billions of euros in security and defence, almost half of which would be spent on basic defence capabilities. This figure was one hundred times higher than the European budget earmarked for this purpose in the next Multiannual Financial Framework. He stressed the importance of channelling these resources towards common priorities in order to achieve the new capability goals and ensure full European defence readiness by 2030. Flagship initiatives, including those dedicated to defence against drones and monitoring of the Eastern flank, should help foster cooperation on the joint management of major pan-European defence programmes, in close partnership with Ukraine.

Finally, Mr KUBILIUS drew attention to the need to overcome the fragmentation of the European defence market and to increase incentives for joint procurement, which could reduce costs by around 30% and increase the share of spending for the benefit of European industry. He concluded by saying that the successful implementation of the roadmap would depend on the collective capacity of the institutions and Member States to transform the vision into tangible results and to achieve, together, the goal of European readiness by 2030.

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

- the need for a change of mindset in the face of threats to European peace and security and the importance of credible deterrence coupled with robust internal resilience;
- the desire to improve consistency between the civilian and military aspects of the EU's readiness, in line with the recommendations in Mr Niinistö's report, including by strengthening the EU's democratic resilience;
- the importance of making better use of synergies between civil and defence technologies, in particular in the fields of drones, artificial intelligence, space and cyber, in order to strengthen both military capabilities and civilian spillovers, including in the agricultural and environmental sectors, while strengthening the EU's technological sovereignty and competitiveness;
- the ambition to build genuine European industrial sovereignty in the field of defence, fostering convergence of national models and ensuring the EU's ability to design and produce its strategic equipment independently of third countries;
- the priority given to military mobility and the development of dual-use infrastructure, supported by increased funding in the next Multiannual Financial Framework;
- the merit of creating European corridors and establishing a 'military Schengen' in coordination with NATO and national defence authorities;
- the importance of complementarity between the efforts of the EU and NATO, in order to ensure the consistency of the defence posture of the EU and its Member States;
- the recognition of the strategic importance of the Eastern flank, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, and the need for an integrated approach based on solidarity

between the Member States concerned and on the principle of a common EU security;

- the determination to involve Ukraine and Moldova more closely in European readiness and resilience efforts, ensuring an appropriate balance between military and civilian support in line with the rule of law-based accession process;
- in this context, the need to promote the gradual integration of the two countries into the European defence technological and industrial base, while complying with European safety and quality standards;
- the social and territorial dimension of strengthening European defence, involving the reskilling and upskilling of the workforce, the creation of quality jobs and better coordination between public employment services, using cohesion policy and the European Skills Guarantee.

The PRESIDENT concluded the discussion by calling for a balanced approach to be maintained between the Union's security requirements, budgetary needs and climate priorities. She considered it essential that the strengthening of defence capabilities be accompanied by a sustained commitment to the green transition and the protection of ecosystems, in a context where the Union's credibility was based on its ability to act consistently in the face of all global crises.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Joint Communication in JOIN(2025) 27/3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

**10. JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – EU GLOBAL CLIMATE AND ENERGY VISION – SECURING EUROPE’S COMPETITIVE ROLE IN WORLD MARKETS AND ACCELERATING THE CLEAN TRANSITION
(JOIN(2025) 25 AND /3; RCC(2025) 96)**

The President introduced the Joint Communication setting out a new EU global climate and energy vision, highlighting the latest alarming developments observed by scientists, namely the record concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere in 2024 and the irreversible degradation of vast areas of coral reef.

In this connection, she welcomed the adoption by the Commission in February of the Clean Industrial Deal, which aimed to speed up decarbonisation while safeguarding the future of the processing industry in Europe. She indicated that the strategy presented that day aimed to develop the external dimension of the Deal.

Ms RIBERA emphasised the importance of pressing ahead with the fight against climate change in the face of a geopolitical context marked by disengagement on the part of some external partners. She commended the joint work of the Commission and the European External Action Service, which had led to the preparation of the international strategy presented that day. She explained that the aim of the strategy was to secure the EU’s place in global markets for clean technologies. She referred in particular to the aspects of the strategy relating to consistency between the Clean Industrial Deal and the external dimension of European policies, and to the focus of the strategy’s actions on EU businesses and on promoting them in other parts of the world.

Ms KALLAS noted that the strategy presented that day strengthened the EU’s credibility by addressing the concerns of its international partners. She explained that the strategy outlined the areas in which the EU would focus its climate and energy diplomacy, while keeping in mind the profound geopolitical

changes currently under way. She then focused on the three main messages of the strategy.

First, she highlighted how closely climate and energy issues were linked to the EU's external relations and security. In a geopolitical context characterised by certain third countries' withdrawal from multilateralism, the EU presented itself as a reliable partner that honoured its commitments.

Then, she noted that all the EU's actions linked to the Clean Industrial Deal had a geostrategic impact, whether it be phasing out fossil fuels, promoting renewable energy, ensuring access to critical materials or securing supply chains.

Lastly, Ms KALLAS referred to the need for the EU to ensure the security of its supply chains and boost its competitiveness in the context of climate change, which was why climate security should be included in the security and defence partnerships that the EU entered into with other global players.

Mr HOEKSTRA stressed the importance of more sustainable growth to enable the EU and its Member States to finance public policies such as education and healthcare while responding to global geopolitical imperatives. The key to achieving this was to implement more reforms at EU and national level and to invest in consumption.

With regard to global climate action, he referred to his recent COP30 preparatory meetings in Belém, Brazil, during which partner countries in Latin America and Africa had clearly recognised the EU's role as a driving force at global level in this field and in the field of development aid. At the same time, they had called for more economic partnerships in order to create a more favourable business environment. Mr HOEKSTRA felt that the strategy presented that day was a good example of what the EU could do in that regard.

Mr JØRGENSEN regretted that many no longer considered the fight against climate change to be a key priority due to emergencies in other areas. He added that some

oil-producing countries were trying to persuade countries in the Global South to embark on a development path based on fossil fuels, including through economic investments conditional on the use of fossil fuels.

He noted in this respect that the countries in the Global South considered the EU to be a credible and reliable partner. However, for many years the EU had not been able to strategically coordinate its many actions in the areas of development aid, investment and climate diplomacy. He therefore stressed that the EU should now become more transaction-oriented and provide a mutually beneficial offer to the countries of the Global South. This included increased participation by European companies in tenders in countries receiving EU support, which in turn would accelerate the green transition and the diversification of supply chains.

Lastly, Mr JØRGENSEN stressed the need for internal coordination and appropriate monitoring of the implementation of the proposed strategy in order for it to be successful.

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

- full support for the proposed strategy;
- the importance of digitalisation as a catalyst for the clean transition, particularly through new technologies that improved the efficient use of natural resources;
- the link between this strategy and EU security, and the need to examine systematically the security aspect of similar initiatives in the future.

The PRESIDENT concluded by recalling the success of the recent Global Gateway Forum, which was evidence of the interest among both the governments of the EU's partner countries and the business community in such EU international initiatives.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Joint Communication

in JOIN(2025) 25/3 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.

**11. JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – THE PACT FOR THE MEDITERRANEAN – ONE SEA, ONE PACT, ONE FUTURE
(JOIN(2025) 26 AND /3; RCC(2025) 98)**

The PRESIDENT introduced the new strategy to strengthen the EU's relations with its southern Mediterranean partners. The Pact for the Mediterranean would help create a connected, prosperous, resilient and secure common Mediterranean space in a challenging and rapidly changing geopolitical environment.

Ms KALLAS stressed the need for a renewed strategy with the region, pointing out that the situation in Syria, Lebanon, Libya and Gaza had been discussed numerous times in the Foreign Affairs Council. Peace and security were key prerequisites for investment and sustainable development in partner countries.

The Pact was a compilation of practical initiatives to improve energy and digital connectivity, transport and innovation, while ensuring secure and reliable connections. It also tackled several shared threats in terms of maritime security, information manipulation and foreign interference, as well as addressing sanctions circumvention by shadow fleets.

Ms KALLAS said the Pact would be on the agenda of the Union for the Mediterranean meeting in Barcelona on 28 November, with a view to political approval by the EU and its southern Mediterranean partners on the 30th anniversary of the Barcelona Process. She called for genuine ownership of the strategy by the countries concerned.

Ms ŠUICA noted that the appointment of a Commissioner for the Mediterranean in the current Commission and the creation of a new Directorate-General for the Middle East, North Africa and the Gulf (DG MENA) reflected the PRESIDENT's determination to boost the EU's engagement with countries in the region. Since the adoption of the new agenda for the Mediterranean in 2021, the geopolitical situation had changed markedly, requiring a new approach and stronger partnerships.

Key stakeholders had been consulted extensively on the Pact – especially governments, civil society and academia in the region – and it was based on a relationship of equals, while fully respecting the principle of sovereignty and shared values. The Pact would be implemented flexibly, as not all partners in the region were moving at the same pace. It would also be open to other partners, such as Gulf and Sub-Saharan African countries, the Western Balkans and Türkiye.

Ms ŠUICA noted that the Pact rested on three interrelated pillars. The first focused on human capital and demographic challenges. It aimed to empower young people in the region to drive change by investing in education, vocational training and skills development. One of the flagship initiatives was to set up a Mediterranean university, building on existing higher education networks to promote joint programmes and degrees and connect students from all around the Mediterranean. The Pact also promoted cultural and sporting cooperation, including through the Mediterranean Games, to foster people-to-people contacts and mutual understanding.

The second pillar aimed to bolster economic cooperation and sustainable growth. It focused on renewable energy and green hydrogen, the creation of a Mediterranean investment platform and enhanced support for SMEs and start-ups, which were the backbone of the region's economies.

The third pillar linked areas that were previously dealt with separately. It promoted regional security and resilience, while improving migration management. The focus

was on broadening legal pathways, preventing irregular migration and creating local opportunities for people to build a future in their own country.

Ms ŠUIČA added that an action plan would be presented in early 2026 to ensure the Pact's operational follow-up. The Commission was also working to revitalise the Union for the Mediterranean – the only forum bringing together Israel and Palestine – and to significantly increase funding for the Southern Neighbourhood under the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

She concluded her presentation by stressing that the Pact for the Mediterranean was also a strategic investment in Europe's stability and prosperity.

During the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the effectiveness of the inclusive and collegial approach taken in drawing up the Pact, as well as the shared desire for swift and coordinated implementation of the measures planned and regular political monitoring;
- the relevance of the migration and security pillar, regarded as central to the credibility of the Pact, and a call to step up cooperation with partner countries to jointly manage migration flows, distinguishing clearly between legal and irregular migration;
- a reference to the positive outcome of existing cooperation agreements – especially with Mauritania and the Western Balkans, quoted as examples of how to effectively reduce irregular arrivals – and the need to better convey the successes and added value of this pragmatic approach;
- the need to tackle the root causes of migration, linked to humanitarian, economic and climate crises;

- in that context, concerns about the situation in Gaza and the West Bank, and the importance of effective humanitarian access, ongoing European assistance and continued vigilance in an ever-changing situation;
- recognition of the Pact's economic and energy potential and its role as a driver of sustainable and green growth in the region;
- with that in mind, the focus on prioritising renewable energy, green hydrogen and support for SMEs and start-ups, and the importance of cementing technology, digital and energy partnerships;
- the practical and sectoral dimension of the Pact, particularly in terms of transport, tourism and fisheries, which were essential sectors for the economies of the countries around the Mediterranean;
- in that context, an explicit reference to the implementation of projects to improve maritime control and inspection capacities to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
- the importance of the human and societal dimension of the Pact, which highlighted youth, culture, sport and intergenerational fairness, and the positive response to the plan to set up a Mediterranean university;
- lastly, a call for cooperation based on trust, shared values and a long-term strategic vision for the stability and prosperity of the Mediterranean basin.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Joint Communication in JOIN(2025) 26/3 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.

12. OTHER BUSINESS

12.1. VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT TO THE WESTERN BALKANS

The PRESIDENT reported on her visit to the Western Balkans from 12 to 15 October. She explained that, while all the countries were pursuing a European path, the situation varied widely from one country to another. She then briefly reviewed the situation and progress in the various countries concerned.

The Commission took note of this information.

12.2. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Ms KALLAS briefed the College on the latest developments in the EU's external relations.

She began by reporting on her visit to Ukraine with Ms VIRKKUNEN. She mentioned Kyiv's expectations for financial and energy support, further sanctions against Russia and the continuation of accession negotiations.

Ms KALLAS then referred to the situation in the Middle East and her attendance on 9 October at the meeting organised by France on implementing President Trump's peace plan in Gaza. A discussion would be held at the next Foreign Affairs Council on 20 October to decide on the arrangements for increased EU support. She welcomed the release of hostages and the ceasefire, while noting that the process was only just beginning.

During the brief discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- Ukraine’s needs in terms of defending its energy infrastructure and rebuilding damaged facilities, and the ongoing discussions to supply the country with liquefied natural gas;
- the opportunities under the SAFE financial instrument, and the specific alliance with Ukraine on drone production;
- the importance for the EU’s credibility of maintaining pressure on Israel to continue the peace process and rebuild Gaza, and the role of the Palestine Donor Group – announced by the PRESIDENT in her State of the Union address – in financing reconstruction;
- the uncertain outcome of the vote scheduled for Friday in the International Maritime Organization on the net zero framework to decarbonise merchant shipping.

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 12.23.