



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2026) 2554 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 4 March 2026

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2554th meeting of the Commission
held in Strasbourg
(Winston Churchill building)
on Tuesday 10 February 2026
(afternoon)**

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Single sitting: Tuesday 10 February 2026 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.05 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
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member
Ms ŠUICA	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member
Mr KUBILIUS	Member
Mr SÍKELA	Member
Mr KADIS	Member
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member
Ms LAHBIB	Member
Mr BRUNNER	Member
Ms ROSWALL	Member
Mr SERAFIN	Member
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member
Mr McGRATH	Member
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member
Mr HANSEN	Member
Mr MICALLEF	Member

Absent:

Mr SÉJOURNÉ	Executive Vice-President
Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President
Ms KOS	Member

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Mr DE GREGORIO	Director-General, Legal Service
Ms SPINANT	Director-General, DG Communication
Ms PODESTA	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission
Mr CALACEAN	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Ms SEMLALI	Policy Assistant in the PRESIDENT's cabinet
Mr CHARLES	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General
Mr TAQUET-GRAZIANI	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2026) 2554/FINAL; SEC(2026) 2554/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(2026) 2554)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on 6 February 2026.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2025) 2547; PV(2025) 2547, PART II; PV(2025) 2548; PV(2025) 2549; PV(2025) 2549, PART II)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2547th, 2548th and 2549th meetings of 3, 10 and 16 December 2025, and held over approval of the minutes of its 2550th, 2551st, 2552nd and 2553rd meetings of 14, 20, 23 and 29 January 2026 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2026) 155)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on Thursday 5 February 2026 (RCC(2026) 155).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2021/947 as regards increased efficiency of the External Action Guarantee (Regulation) – McALLISTER & GOERENS report – 2025/0262 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 21.

- **Objections to draft implementing acts pursuant to Rule 115(2) and (3) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament: Draft Commission implementing decision authorising the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified soybean DBN-09004-6, pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council / Draft Commission implementing decision renewing the authorisation for the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified maize T25, pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council / Draft Commission implementing decision renewing the authorisation for the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified cotton GHB614 × LLCotton25, pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council / Draft Commission implementing decision renewing the authorisation for the placing on the market of products containing, consisting of or produced from genetically modified cotton T304-40, pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 1829/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council**

Line set out in SP(2026) 29.

- **Implementing enhanced cooperation on the establishment of the Ukraine Support Loan for 2026 and 2027 (Regulation) – 2026/0008 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 18.

- **EU position to be taken in the meetings of the Specialised Committee on Fisheries (SCF), established under Article 508 of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement**

Line set out in SI(2026) 25.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Scrutiny of delegated and implementing acts and related empowerments (DG CLIMA & DG TAXUD)**

Information set out in SPI(2026) 28.

- **Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2024/1252 (Regulation) – 2025/0385 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2026) 23.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2026) 204; RCC(2026) 205)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2026) 204 and RCC(2026) 205 of the meetings of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Friday 30 January and Thursday 5 February 2026.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2026) 35 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 26 January and 8 February 2026.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2026) 36 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 26 January and 8 February 2026.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2026) 37 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 26 January and 8 February 2026 archived in Decide.

6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED

(SEC(2026) 38 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 9 and 13 February 2026.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2026) 39)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2026) 8)

**7.1. DG REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY – APPOINTMENT OF A
DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14**

(PERS(2026) 9 AND /2)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the 'Budget, Communication and General Affairs' Directorate in DG Regional and Urban Policy (PERS(2026) 9).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 18 December 2025 and 22 January 2026 (PERS(2026) 9/2).

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 FITTO, it then decided to appoint Ms Davinia WOOD to the post.

This decision would take effect on 16 February 2026.

**7.2. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL / REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD –
ADOPTION OF A LIST OF SUITABLE CANDIDATES FOR THE POST
OF PRINCIPAL ADVISER – MEMBER OF THE REGULATORY
SCRUTINY BOARD, AT GRADE AD14
(PERS(2024) 62 TO /3)**

Having noted the procedure followed, as set out in point 2 of PERS(2026) 8, the Commission decided, on a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, to draw up a shortlist, valid for three years, consisting of only one candidate, Ms Helen Rebecca SCHINDLER, for the post of Principal Adviser – Member of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in the Secretariat-General.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.3. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL / REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD –
APPOINTMENT OF A PRINCIPAL ADVISER – MEMBER OF THE
REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD, AT GRADE AD14**

Having noted the procedure followed, as set out in point 3 of PERS(2026) 8, the Commission decided, on a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, to appoint Ms Helen Rebecca SCHINDLER to the post of Principal Adviser – Member of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in the Secretariat-General, and to hire her as a member of the temporary staff under

Article 2(a) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union for an initial period of three years.

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

7.4. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – EUROPEAN COMMISSION DECISIONS ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF FORMER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

(C(2026) 9003; C(2026)9004)

The Commission decided that the professional activities envisaged by Ms Věra JOUROVÁ and Ms Elisa FERREIRA 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(2026) 9003 and C(2026) 9004.

8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – ACTION PLAN AGAINST CYBERBULLYING: ‘SAFER ONLINE, STRONGER TOGETHER’

(COM(2026) 71 TO /3; RCC(2026) 9)

The PRESIDENT introduced the action plan against cyberbullying, which aimed to make the online world safer for children and young people. She stressed that cyberbullying exacerbated the impact of social media use by young people and could cause long-lasting psychological damage. The action plan addressed a behaviour which was morally unacceptable and which society urgently needed to tackle, requiring a coordinated European response.

Ms VIRKKUNEN described the broader political and societal context of the action plan, which was being presented on Safer Internet Day, an initiative launched in the EU in 2004 and which now took place in some 160 countries around the world. Digital technologies had become central to social life, education and economic activity. While this digital transformation of society brought multiple benefits, it should not come at the expense of safety, dignity and well-being, especially for younger people.

She noted the rapid increase in cyberbullying in Europe and observed that it affected a significant proportion of children via multiple channels. It was estimated that around 1 in 6 children aged 11 to 15 reported that they had been victims of cyberbullying and 1 in 8 admitted to cyberbullying others. She added that, in several Member States, cyberbullying was still not sufficiently recognised as a risk to society, warranting decisive and coordinated action at EU level.

Ms VIRKKUNEN presented the action plan as a key policy instrument for shaping Europe's response. In that connection, she stressed that digital literacy, education and prevention policies were important long-term investments in social resilience. The Digital Services Act (DSA) was the main EU legal framework for tackling cyberbullying, hate content and online disinformation. It made digital platforms responsible for ensuring that users, especially minors, were better protected. She gave the example of how the Commission had recently stepped up its action against TikTok and the chatbot Grok (part of X), which demonstrated the EU's determination to hold platforms accountable. She presented these developments as part of a wider-reaching European goal to set global standards for online safety.

She also stressed the importance of ensuring that victims of bullying had simple and easily accessible ways of reporting bullying and getting help. That was why a key part of the Action plan was the EU-wide release of an easy-to-use app for reporting cyberbullying to a national helpline.

Ms VIRKKUNEN concluded by stressing that all young people had to be equally protected against cyberbullying, wherever they were in the EU. Member States therefore needed to develop comprehensive national plans and use a common understanding of cyberbullying to collect and compare data. This was an important step towards having a more united approach to tackling cyberbullying in the EU.

Mr MICALLEF described cyberbullying as a persistent and all-pervasive phenomenon affecting young people's mental health, self-esteem and social development. Digital technologies meant that toxic behaviours could continue relentlessly, day and night, and reached victims in their homes, which should be the ultimate safe place. Moreover, humiliating images published online could be shared indefinitely, potentially making a person a victim forever. He confirmed that a significant proportion of children were victims of cyberbullying. Some victims then went on to become bullies themselves, while others withdrew, with the risk that they could be left behind in the digital age. This confirmed the systemic nature of the problem and the need for structured intervention at European level.

He explained that the action plan had three strands, focusing on protection, prevention and empowerment. With regard to protection, he took the view that the existing regulatory tools needed to be enforced more effectively to tackle cyberbullying. He referred to the upcoming review of the DSA guidelines to tighten up the measures that online platforms had to take to prevent minors from being exposed to harmful content and to make it easier to report any such content. DSA guidelines would soon be adopted on trusted flaggers in order to clarify their role in the fight against illegal content. He also mentioned the question of effectively enforcing the transparency requirements under the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act, including through a code of practice on the marking and labelling of AI-generated content, which could be misused for cyberbullying.

On prevention, the action plan promoted healthy, responsible and respectful digital practices from an early age. Mr MICALLEF felt that it was necessary to improve children's digital skills to help them use the internet safely, spot harm early and seek

help without fear or shame. Updated guidelines and teaching materials would be issued for teachers and educators, enabling them to tackle disinformation and cyberbullying. He stressed the importance of involving parents, teachers and youth organisations in prevention efforts and of making digital literacy a key skill in education systems.

Lastly, on the issue of empowerment, he considered it essential to improve reporting and support mechanisms. On many platforms, reporting procedures were often so complex that they discouraged victims from reporting incidents. As part of the action plan, the Commission was planning to release an easy-to-access app for reporting cyberbullying to a national helpline. Member States would be able to adapt the app, translate it and link it up to the appropriate national bodies. On that point, he stressed the importance of ensuring that reporting via the online app was part of a holistic and functioning ecosystem for managing cases and providing victims with support. This support should consist of immediate multidisciplinary assistance combining legal, social, psychological and educational services as well as support from the police.

Mr MICALLEF concluded by stressing that the action plan did not introduce new legislation, but rather sought to maximise the impact of the existing regulatory framework through better implementation, improved coordination and tailored advice. The overall objective was to ensure that digital technologies served the interests of users, especially minors, and helped make the online environment safer and more accountable.

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

- the huge scale of the phenomenon of cyberbullying, which was probably still underestimated, and its often insidious nature;

- the importance of a coordinated European response commensurate with the cross-border dimension of the phenomenon, based on a whole-of-society approach;
- the fact that the action plan followed on from previous initiatives such as the EU agenda for the rights of the child, the European Child Guarantee, the EU children’s participation platform and the strategy for a better internet for kids, and that it complemented other initiatives that were being developed, especially the Digital Fairness Act and the education package;
- the extremely rapid pace at which technology was developing, bringing with it major benefits, but also a long-term impact on children that was still difficult to gauge, and the need to ensure equivalent standards of protection for children and young people both online and offline;
- in that connection, the Youth Advisory Board’s call for tighter regulation of digital platforms to ensure safer and empowering environments for young people, as well as the favourable reception given to ongoing investigations into certain platforms;
- the observation that cyberbullying was set to continue, and, with that in mind, the need to raise awareness and make witnesses better able to react, particularly on public platforms, and to give children tools to develop the skills and resilience they needed to deal with cyberbullying;
- the focus on preventing cyberbullying, especially through digital literacy, to help parents, teachers and educators support children better, including by developing guidelines in cooperation with the Member States;
- a reminder that cyberbullying primarily affected the most vulnerable groups, and a commitment to ensuring that the EU’s digital policies helped combat discrimination, hatred and violence online and offline, with women and the LGBTIQ+ community being disproportionately affected;

- the need for tools at European level to monitor developments on the ground and assess the effectiveness of the policies put in place;
- the growing need to obtain justice for victims and the fact that, in order to do so, it had to be possible to track down cyberbullies, whose anonymity made them hard to identify, as well as the role of judicial authorities given the criminal dimension of certain acts of bullying.

In response to some of the points raised during the debate, Ms VIRKKUNEN stressed that children's right to be connected and to access information had to go hand in hand with the provision of age-appropriate content. The Commission was looking into how platforms could verify age, in particular for children under 13 and young people aged between 13 and 18; the results would help guide the next steps, particularly with regard to high-risk platforms.

Setting a minimum age for accessing social networks fell within the competence of the Member States; however, fragmentation of the rules could cause difficulties in the digital environment. A group of experts was working on defining a European approach on age thresholds. Reliable age-verification tools would be required under a reinforced legislative framework, whilst avoiding users having to share an excessive amount of personal data with platforms.

Ms VIRKKUNEN noted that while some forms of behaviour were criminal in nature, situations involving minors often required a nuanced approach. In this regard, she referred to the role of national digital services coordinators and the competent national authorities, in particular for smaller platforms, and the transparency obligations imposed on online platforms. Finally, she mentioned the example of Finland, where limitation of the use of mobile phones during the school day had been accompanied by a marked decrease in cases of cyberbullying.

Mr MICALLEF explained that the action plan proposed an operational definition of cyberbullying, based in particular on the repetitive nature of behaviour and the power imbalances specific to digital environments. Some Member States had

already classified certain forms of cyberbullying as criminal, whilst others had not; the Commission intended to provide guidance that could be used at national level, without moving towards full harmonisation. Lastly, he stressed the need to avoid any fragmentation of the rules on a minimum age for accessing the digital environment, calling for a coordinated approach at European level.

The PRESIDENT felt that the discussion should focus more broadly on the overall impact of social networks on children and adolescents during a period of development characterised by particular vulnerability. She mentioned the dynamics of addiction and social pressure specific to these digital environments, and their increasingly documented effects on mental health.

In terms of courses of action, she referred to the work of the expert group on child protection, which was looking in particular at age-based access restrictions. She emphasised the need to avoid a binary approach based on a single threshold. She considered that a common regulatory framework should be discussed with the Member States, based on reliable age-verification mechanisms. Finally, there were broader challenges linked to online anonymity and the identification of accounts, in the context of growing concerns about the impact of bots on democratic processes.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2026) 71/3 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.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1. COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION ON THE REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION, PURSUANT TO REGULATION (EU) 2019/788 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL, OF THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE ENTITLED 'EU INITIATIVE TO

***PROTECT STRAY DOGS, STRAY CATS AND ANIMALS IN SHELTERS
IN THE EU/NON-EU COUNTRIES'***
(C(2026) 958)

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ presented to the College the request for registration of the European Citizens' Initiative entitled, in the authentic language (German), *'EU-Initiative Schutz von Straßenhunden, Katzen und Tierheimtieren in EU/Drittstaaten'* ('EU initiative to protect stray dogs, stray cats and animals in shelters in the EU/non-EU countries').

The objective of the initiative, as stated by the organisers, was to call on the Commission to strengthen the protection of stray dogs, stray cats and animals in shelters in the EU and to ensure that EU action in third countries did not contribute to animal suffering. The organisers also called for further restrictions on the use of cats and dogs for scientific purposes, and for EU trade, association and financing instruments to be designed so that their benefits could be enjoyed by third countries only if minimum standards for the protection of dogs and cats were respected.

The Commission could adopt proposals concerning: (i) animal shelters housing cats or dogs, insofar as the shelters conducted an economic activity within the EU market; (ii) the use of animals for scientific purposes, including stray and shelter animals; (iii) the addition of relevant clauses in international trade or association agreements; and (iv) the conditionality of the granting of Union funds upon compliance with minimum standards for the protection of stray animals. The objective of protecting stray cats and dogs for animal welfare reasons, however, fell outside the Commission's remit, as it was exclusively the responsibility of national authorities.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ therefore proposed that the citizens' initiative be partially registered, i.e. only those parts that clearly did not go beyond the scope of the Commission's powers. He concluded his presentation by pointing out that the

organisers would now have to start collecting the necessary number of signatures, i.e. at least one million signatures in seven Member States. It was only after the signatures had been collected that the Commission would give its opinion on the substance of the initiative.

Following this presentation, the Commission confirmed that the citizens' initiative entitled '*EU-Initiative Schutz von Straßenhunden, Katzen und Tierheimtieren in EU/Drittstaaten*' partially fulfilled the conditions for registration. In accordance with C(2026) 958, it therefore decided to inform the organisers and authorised Mr ŠEFČOVIČ to sign the reply on behalf of the College, to send it to the organisers, and to publish it, for information, in the *Official Journal of the European Union*. The Commission also agreed to transmit this decision, for information, to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

9.2. PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL ELECTIONS

The PRESIDENT reminded the College that the Treaties provided that Members must be completely independent and must not seek or take instructions from any government or other institution, body, office or entity. At the same time, according to their Code of Conduct, Commissioners had a responsibility to maintain political contacts with Member States, including with national political parties and administrations. In this context, she drew attention to the particular political sensitivities in election periods and to Members' obligation to seek her agreement and await her approval in writing if they intended to participate in national elections.

At the PRESIDENT's request, the Secretary-General pointed out that specific rules had been set out in the Guidelines for the participation of Members of the European Commission in election campaigns at Member State level. These rules covered two situations, namely active and non-active participation

of Members of the College in election campaigns in the Member States in which they had affiliations to national political parties. In both cases, the rules required Members of the College to inform the PRESIDENT immediately of their intention to take part in such campaigns.

Many other situations could also arise, insofar as Members of the College regularly travelled to the Member States and elections were always being held somewhere in Europe, be it at local, regional or national level. When travelling to the Member States, Members of the College had to be mindful of political sensitivities and public opinion, so as not to be perceived as interfering with national elections. Whilst promoting the common European priorities and values, this meant paying particular attention to: (i) meeting with stakeholders across the political spectrum; (ii) focusing interventions on portfolio-related issues and initiatives; and (iii) taking account of possible perceived bias in the framework of press conferences.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 13.58.