



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2026) 2555 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 18 March 2026

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2555th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 18 February 2026

(morning)

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PV(2026) 2555 final

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Single sitting: Wednesday 18 February 2026 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.01 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Ms RIBERA	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 ŠEFČOVIČ	Member	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member	Items 8 and 9
Ms ŠUICA	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member	
Mr KUBILIUS	Member	
Ms KOS	Member	
Mr SÍKELA	Member	
Mr KADIS	Member	
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member	
Ms ROSWALL	Member	
Mr SERAFIN	Member	
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member	
Mr HANSEN	Member	
Mr MICALLEF	Member	

Absent:

Ms VIRKKUNEN	Executive Vice-President
Ms LAHBIB	Member
Mr BRUNNER	Member
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member
Mr McGRATH	Member
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member

The following also sat in:

Mr ADAM	Deputy Head of Cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr LADENBURGER	Deputy Director-General, Legal Service	Items 1 to 7 and item 8 (in part)
Mr DE GREGORIO	Director-General, Legal Service	Item 8 (in part) and item 9
Ms PINHO	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms ERIKSSON WATERSCHOOT	Deputy Director-General, DG Communication	
Ms HAENICKE	Member of the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Ms SEMLALI	Policy Assistant in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr TAQUET-GRAZIANI	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	
Ms DAGILE	Deputy 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) 2555/FINAL; SEC(2026) 2555/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) 2555)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Monday 16 February 2026.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2550th, 2551st, 2552nd, 2553rd and 2554th meetings of 14, 20, 23 and 29 January and 10 February 2026 for a later date.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(RCC(2026) 156)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on Friday 13 February 2026 (RCC(2026) 156).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

- **Addressing the negative trade-related effects of global overcapacity on the Union steel market (Regulation) – KARLSBRO report – 2025/0726 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 22.

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

Line set out in SI(2026) 18/3.

- **Measures necessary for the implementation of Protocol No 37 on the financial consequences of the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and on the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, annexed to the Treaty on European Union and to the Treaty for the Functioning of the European Union (Council Decision) – 2025/0390 (APP) / Adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, multiannual technical guidelines for this programme, multiannual financial guidelines for managing the assets of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel, and repeal of Decisions 2003/77/EC and 2008/376/EC (Council Decision) – 2025/0398 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 30.

- **Restrictive measures combatting terrorism (Council Regulation) – 2025/0403 (NLE)**

Line set out in SI(2026) 33.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Scrutiny of delegated and implementing acts and related empowerments (DG MOVE)**

Information set out in SPI(2026) 29.

- **Scrutiny of delegated and implementing acts and related empowerments (DG AGRI)**

Information set out in SPI(2026) 27.

- **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(2026) 29.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2026) 206)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2026) 206 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Thursday 12 February 2026.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2026) 40 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 9 and 15 February 2026.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2026) 41 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 9 and 15 February 2026.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2026) 42 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 9 and 15 February 2026 archived in Decide.

**6.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED
(SEC(2026) 43 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 16 and 20 February 2026.

**7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2026) 44)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2026) 10)**

**7.1. DG COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS, CONTENT AND
TECHNOLOGY – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14
(PERS(2026) 11 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 'Online Platforms: Society' Directorate in DG Communications Networks, Content and Technology (PERS(2026) 11).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 18 December 2025 and 29 January 2026 (PERS(2026) 11/2).

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 VIRKKUNEN, it then decided to appoint Mr Prabhat AGARWAL to the post.

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

**7.2. DG FINANCIAL STABILITY, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CAPITAL
MARKETS UNION – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT
GRADE AD14
(PERS(2026) 12 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 ‘General Affairs’ Directorate in DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union (PERS(2026) 12).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 18 December 2025 and 8 January 2026 (PERS(2026) 11/2).

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 ALBUQUERQUE, it then decided to appoint Mr Didier MILLEROT to the post.

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

**7.3. DG FINANCIAL STABILITY, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CAPITAL
MARKETS UNION – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT
GRADE AD14
(PERS(2026) 13 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 ‘Horizontal Policies’ Directorate in DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union (PERS(2026) 13).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 18 December 2025 and 22 January 2026 (PERS(2026) 13/2).

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 ALBUQUERQUE, it then decided to appoint Ms Astrid COUSIN to the post.

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

7.4. DG MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT – TRANSFER OF AN AD14 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 7 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr HANSEN, Mr TZITZIKOSTAS and Mr JØRGENSEN, the Commission decided to transfer, in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Carmen Rosa NARANJO SANCHEZ, currently Director of the 'Resources' Directorate in DG Agriculture and Rural Development, to the vacant post of Director of the 'Shared Resources MOVE/ENER' Directorate in DG Mobility and Transport.

This decision would take effect on 16 March 2026.

**7.5. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF A LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR THE POST OF HEAD OF THE EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION TO THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION IN GENEVA (AT GRADE AD14/15)
(PERS(2026) 14)**

On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to approve the list of candidates for the post of Head of the European Union Delegation to the World Trade Organization in Geneva (at grade AD14/15) in PERS(2026) 14.

The competent authority of the European External Action Service (EEAS) would make the final appointment on the basis of this list.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – COMMUNICATION ON THE EU’S EASTERN REGIONS BORDERING RUSSIA, BELARUS AND UKRAINE – STRONG REGIONS FOR A SAFE EUROPE
(COM(2026) 82 TO /4; RCC(2026) 11)**

The PRESIDENT introduced the Communication presented that day, noting that Russia had started its full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine almost four years ago. In view of the severe impact of the war on the eastern regions of the EU bordering Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, she stressed the need for strong support for local communities.

Mr FITTO pointed out that the initiative, referred to in his mission letter, was a strong political message of solidarity with the regions concerned. The Communication addressed the specific challenges that the communities in these regions were facing, in particular an economic downturn, demographic decline and rising insecurity. He considered that supporting these communities was a necessity that fell under the political responsibility of the EU.

He stressed that the Communication was based on a concrete and collective effort involving missions on the ground, exchanges with national, regional and local authorities, and stakeholder consultations. The message received was clear and highlighted the need for investment, services, connectivity and economic opportunities, in addition to security and defence.

The EU had already mobilised a substantial amount of aid for these regions, including through its cohesion policy. The 2025 mid-term review of this policy had

recognised the particular situation of these border areas and enabled them to obtain additional resources, notably by increasing pre-financing and co-financing possibilities. These flexibilities had been used by the Member States concerned to develop their defence industries, military mobility, civilian preparedness and critical infrastructure. However, the economic and security conditions in these regions continued to deteriorate as a result of the ongoing war, making additional EU support necessary.

Mr FITTO then referred to the five priority areas in which the Communication proposed action: (i) security and resilience to address hybrid threats and persistent security gaps; (ii) regional growth and prosperity, including through the establishment of a financing facility, EastInvest, bringing together the European Investment Bank (EIB) Group, international financial institutions and several national and regional promotional banks in the Member States concerned; (iii) harnessing local strengths in industry, agriculture, forestry, research, skills and natural resources; (iv) connectivity, with a focus on transport, energy and digital; and (v) people, with support focused on services, education, healthcare, youth and civil preparedness.

In these five areas, the guiding principles would be a place-based approach and multi-level governance. Mr FITTO pointed out that the challenges differed depending on whether a region was bordering Russia, Belarus or Ukraine, creating a need for tailor-made solutions. He stressed that the borders in question were not only national but also EU borders, and therefore of concern to all Europeans.

Lastly, he referred to the high-level conference scheduled for 26 February, at which the strategy for these regions would be unveiled and the EastInvest facility officially established. He concluded by stressing that strengthening the eastern border regions was a strategic investment in the EU's security, stability, cohesion and competitiveness.

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

- the strong political signal of this Communication which would, however, need to be translated into concrete support for the regions severely affected by the proximity of the conflict;
- the observation that these regions were facing reduced investment and increased defence spending at the expense of other policies;
- the importance in this regard of cohesion policy, which had played a major role in the development of these regions in the context of EU enlargement and now had to be adapted to the context of the war;
- the potentially lasting nature of the challenges facing these regions, given that Russia had shifted to a war economy and showed no sign of wanting to end the conflict;
- the vital importance of the stability of these regions for the common security of the entire EU;
- the relevance of including in the Communication the maritime borders with Russia, Belarus and Ukraine and of recognising the disruptions suffered by the fisheries sector;
- the problems posed in this regard by the Russian management of fishery resources and the advisability of relaunching attempts to extend existing sanctions to exports of fish from Russia to the EU;
- the richness of natural resources in these regions and the role that the bioeconomy and the implementation of the Nature Restoration Law could play in generating growth and boosting resilience;

- in the absence of new financial resources, the importance of the measures proposed to stimulate investment and the need to take this particular context into account when assessing compliance with State aid rules;
- the warning sign of demographic decline in these regions and the need to pay attention to the electoral consequences of the dissatisfaction caused by this worsening situation in some Member States.

Following the presentation, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2026) 82/4 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and, for information, to the national parliaments.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Ms KALLAS reported briefly on the outcome of the 62nd Munich Security Conference held from 13 to 15 February, and of the G7 Foreign Ministers' meeting on 14 February, also held in Munich. She had raised the issue of banning maritime services for Russia's shadow fleet with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, but no concrete progress had been made on this issue or on the questions of security guarantees or aid for Ukraine. She noted the fundamental change in the world order, which now needed to be reshaped, including from the point of view of EU enlargement, an issue that could be the subject of regular political discussions in the European Council.

On Ukraine, Ms KALLAS noted that discussions with Russia and the United States had stalled but that the situation on the front had improved, as Russian troops had stopped advancing. She mentioned the constructive meeting with the new Ukrainian Minister for Defence, Mykhailo Fedorov, and suggested inviting him to a forthcoming meeting of the Security College.

Lastly, she reported on discussions in Munich on the future of multilateralism, ahead of the first meeting of the Board of Peace set up by US President Donald Trump.

The Commission took note of this information.

9.2. *INFORMAL EU LEADERS' RETREAT, 12 FEBRUARY 2026*

The PRESIDENT informed the College of the outcome of the informal EU leaders' retreat held on 12 February in Alden Biesen, during which leaders had discussed ways of boosting competitiveness and strengthening economic growth in Europe. The two working sessions had been introduced by Mr Mario Draghi and Mr Enrico Letta respectively and five main points had been addressed: (i) reducing the administrative burden, (ii) completing the single market, (iii) EU trade policy, (iv) energy prices and (v) the digital agenda.

On the reduction of the administrative burden, the PRESIDENT pointed out that the Commission had already proposed 10 Omnibus simplification packages, of which only three had been adopted so far by the co-legislators. It was only after final adoption that the administrative burden could be reduced and the substantial expected savings of around EUR 15 billion per year generated. She noted, however, that the administrative burden did not stem solely from EU law, pointing to the difficulties caused by gold-plating by Member States. She added that the Commission should in future introduce more sunset clauses in its proposals.

On the completion of the single market, the PRESIDENT noted that the Commission should continue to do its best to remove the remaining obstacles, including through infringement procedures. EU leaders had addressed three main points in this context: (i) creating a 28th voluntary regime for businesses, which would be the subject of a policy debate at the next Commission meeting and then of a Commission proposal for the March

European Council; (ii) implementing a genuine Savings and Investments Union, which generated high expectations but also some resistance from Member States; and (iii) updating the merger control guidelines, on which the Commission would hold an orientation debate on 18 March. With this in mind, the Commission would draw up a roadmap on completing the single market by 2028, with a view to the March European Council. The roadmap would be accompanied by clear objectives and a precise timeline for implementation, and would be co-signed with the Presidents of the European Parliament and the Council.

On future EU trade policy, the PRESIDENT noted that leaders had welcomed the recent free trade agreements with Indonesia, Mercosur, India and Switzerland, and supported the ongoing negotiations on future free trade agreements.

She noted that, despite the growing share of renewables, energy prices were consistently higher in Europe than in the United States and China, due to the existing pricing system. Discussions had taken place on the advisability of decoupling electricity prices from the volatile costs of fossil fuels, on cross-border interconnections and on the Emissions Trading System. On 6 March the Commission would hold an orientation debate on energy prices with Fatih Birol, Executive Director of the International Energy Agency.

Lastly, she referred to discussions on the digital agenda, especially artificial intelligence, gigafactories and European business wallets. In this regard, the Commission should continue its work on digital networks legislation, cloud computing and development of artificial intelligence.

The PRESIDENT concluded by stressing that these discussions had paved the way for decisions on European competitiveness to be taken at the March European Council.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 9.53.