



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2026) 2562 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 6 May 2026

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2562nd meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Monday 13 April 2026

(morning)

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Single sitting: Monday 13 April 2026 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.06 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
Mr FITTO	Executive Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Member
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Member
Ms ŠUICA	Member
Mr HOEKSTRA	Member
Mr KUBILIUS	Member
Ms KOS	Member
Ms ALBUQUERQUE	Member
Ms LAHBIB	Member
Mr BRUNNER	Member
Ms ROSWALL	Member
Mr JØRGENSEN	Member
Ms ZAHARIEVA	Member
Mr McGRATH	Member
Mr MICALLEF	Member

Absent:

Ms KALLAS	High Representative / Vice-President
Ms MÎNZATU	Executive Vice-President
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Mr SÍKELA	Member
Mr KADIS	Member
Mr SERAFIN	Member
Mr TZITZIKOSTAS	Member
Mr HANSEN	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 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 VAN KEMSEKE	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr MORDUE	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Ms SEMLALI	Policy assistant in the PRESIDENT's cabinet	
Mr ENGEL	Policy analyst at IDEA	Items 7 and 8
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.

The PRESIDENT opened the meeting by commending the high turnout of the Hungarian people in the general election on 12 April, which resulted in a participation rate close to 80%. She welcomed Hungary's return to the European path, considering that the European Union had emerged stronger from this election.

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1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2026) 2562/FINAL; SEC(2026) 2562/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) 2562)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Heads of Cabinet held on Friday 10 April 2026.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

(PV(2026) 2556; PV(2026) 2556, PART II; PV(2026) 2557; PV(2026) 2558; PV(2026) 2558, PART II)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2556th, 2557th and 2558th meetings of 26 February and 2 and 4/6 March 2026, and held over approval of the minutes of its 2559th, 2560th and 2561st meetings of 10, 18 and 25 March 2026 for a later date.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2026) 166)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (GRI) held on Thursday 9 April 2026 (RCC(2026) 166).

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) 97/2.

- **EU position to be taken in consultations with the UK as regards, on the one hand, technical measures in the Celtic Seas and Channel and, on the other hand, brown crab in the North Sea, Western Waters and the Celtic Seas**

Line set out in SI(2026) 96.

- **Resolution of the European Parliament under Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) – The 28th Regime: a new legal framework for innovative companies – REPASI report – 2025/2079 (INL)**

Line set out in SP(2026) 104.

- **Draft Joint Declaration ‘Europe for Culture – Culture for Europe’ – Establishment of a Commission mandate prior to the launch of trilateral negotiations – COM(2025) 786**

Line set out in SPI(2026) 44.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

PV(2026) 2562 final

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2026) 85 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 23 March and 12 April 2026.

5.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2026) 86 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 23 March and 12 April 2026.

5.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2026) 87 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedures between 23 March and 12 April 2026, as archived in Decide.

5.4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES SPECIFICALLY IDENTIFIED

(SEC(2026) 88)

The Commission took note of the written procedures specifically identified for which the time limit expired between 13 and 17 April 2026.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2026) 89 AND /2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2026) 31 AND /2)

In the absence of Mr SERAFIN, the Secretary-General presented two additional proposals for administrative decisions which were tabled directly to the College for

approval. It was proposed to approve the appointment of Mr Anthony WHELAN as Director-General of DG Competition and Mr Leopoldo RUBINACCI as Chair of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board.

**6.1. DG COMPETITION – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR-GENERAL
AT GRADE AD15
(PERS(2026) 21 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director-General of DG Competition (PERS(2026) 21/2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 1 and 7 April 2026 (PERS(2026) 21/3).

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 Anthony WHELAN to the post.

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

**6.2. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL / REGULATORY SCRUTINY BOARD –
APPOINTMENT OF THE CHAIR OF THE REGULATORY SCRUTINY
BOARD AT GRADE AD15
(PERS(2026) 19 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Chair of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board at the Secretariat-General (PERS(2026) 19/2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 20 March and 7 April 2026 (PERS(2026) 21/3).

(13 April 2026)

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 Leopoldo RUBINACCI to the post.

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

6.3. DG MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES – APPOINTMENT OF A DIRECTOR AT GRADE AD14 (PERS(2026) 32 AND /2)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director of the 'General Affairs and Resources' Directorate in DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (PERS(2026) 32).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 26 February and 12 March 2026 (PERS(2026) 32/2).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr KADIS, it then decided to appoint Ms Carmen PREISING to the post.

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

6.4. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF A SPECIAL ADVISER FOR EU-ARCTIC RELATIONS

The Commission took note of the information set out in point 2 of PERS(2026) 31 and, on a proposal from Mr SERAFIN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided:

- to appoint Mr Jyrki KATAINEN as Special Adviser for EU-Arctic relations, reporting to Mr SÍKELA;

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- that Mr Jyrki KATAINEN would receive remuneration for his services. His contract as Special Adviser would be concluded for a period of six months, for a maximum of 42 working days over the entire duration of that contract. This contract would take effect from the date of closure of the notification to the Budgetary Authority under Article 123(2) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants. Pending the completion of this procedure, an unpaid contract could be concluded;
- to instruct the Director-General of DG Budget to immediately inform the Budgetary Authority of the intention to conclude this Special Adviser contract;
- to authorise the Director-General of DG Human Resources and Security to implement this decision by making the necessary contractual arrangements on behalf of the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**6.5. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – EUROPEAN COMMISSION DECISION
ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF A FORMER MEMBER
OF THE COMMISSION
(C(2026) 9011)**

The Commission decided that the professional activities envisaged by Ms Elisa FERREIRA after leaving office as a Member 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 Decision in C(2026) 9011.

7. ORIENTATION DEBATE ON THE IMPACT ON THE EU OF THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The PRESIDENT introduced the orientation debate on the impact on the EU of the situation in the Middle East, noting that the region had now been plagued by the high-intensity conflict triggered by Israeli-American bombardments for more than 40 days. A fragile and partial calm had taken hold in recent days, but negotiations between Iran and the United States had recently ended in stalemate, with Israeli strikes on Lebanon continuing.

Although only a relatively small proportion of the oil and gas imported by the EU passed through the Strait of Hormuz, the closure of the Strait had had immediate consequences, particularly on prices. She stressed that energy had become an issue of national and EU security; as long as the EU was dependent on fossil fuel imports, it would remain vulnerable to external shocks. She pointed out that, following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the EU has diversified its supply sources and stepped up its investment in renewable energy, with a view to gradually reducing its reliance on Russian imports.

The PRESIDENT highlighted the benefits of energy produced in Europe, as it ensured security of supply and price stability. She therefore called for the deployment of secure and affordable energy to be accelerated, based on renewables and nuclear, and for the electrification to be stepped up. Although almost 70% of Europe's electricity already came from nuclear and renewables, electricity still accounted for only around 23% of energy consumption, hence the urgent need to make progress on electrification for both households and industry.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS presented the likely economic impact of the crisis in the Middle East and the potential economic and fiscal policy measures the EU could introduce. He began by pointing out that this crisis was already having a significant impact on the European economy, with rising energy costs leading to higher inflation and a slowdown in economic activity. Moreover, the Commission was

predicting that financing conditions would be stricter and risk premiums higher, that external demand would drop, given that this was a global shock, and that investment from the Gulf countries would be lower. Global supply chains for fossil fuels and their derivatives had been significantly affected, as had those for key commodities such as fertilisers. Even if a ceasefire stabilised the situation in the Strait of Hormuz in the coming weeks, it would still take several weeks or even months for supply chains to be restored.

Given that context, Mr DOMBROVSKIS felt that the duration and nature of these disruptions would determine the extent and seriousness of the overall macroeconomic impact on the EU of the Middle East crisis. The Commission had run simulations on the basis of different scenarios, with the variable being whether the disruptions were short- or long-term. In the first, short-term scenario, and unless additional discretionary fiscal policy measures were introduced, EU growth in 2026 could be 0.4% lower than pre-Iran-war projections, inflation could be up to 1% higher and public finances could deteriorate by around 0.2% of gross domestic product (GDP). In the second, longer-term scenario, growth could be 0.4% to 0.6% lower and inflation 1.1% to 1.5% higher in both 2026 and 2027. Meanwhile, public finances could deteriorate by 0.6% of GDP in 2026 and by 1% of GDP in 2027. Mr DOMBROVSKIS explained that these figures were based on scenario analysis, without taking into account potential supply disruptions, and that they would be set out in detail in the Commission's spring economic forecasts, to be published in May.

He then gave an overview of the potential economic policy responses, pointing out that, as this was a traditional supply shock, energy demand would have to be revised downwards. He noted that the energy toolbox devised in 2021 and 2022 already included measures to reduce gas and electricity consumption. The EU should also now reduce its oil consumption, while providing targeted support for vulnerable households and energy-intensive industries. The EU could not afford to repeat certain measures implemented in response to the 2022 energy crisis, as they were

not targeted, were extremely costly and difficult to phase out gradually, and were also driving up demand for energy. Given the current state of public finances and the fact that interest rates were significantly higher than in 2022, it was essential to maintain market confidence in the sustainability of the budgetary situation in all Member States.

In view of the above, Mr DOMBROVSKIS pointed out that Member States should draw on the existing ‘automatic stabilisers’ to mitigate the impact of the energy shock on households and businesses. Discretionary support measures should be kept to a minimum and meet three key conditions, namely (i) they should not increase demand for oil and gas, (ii) they should include a clear and automatic sunset clause and (iii) they should target the most vulnerable households and industries. In his view, this meant that sweeping or untargeted measures should not be introduced, such as a value added tax (VAT) reduction designed to bring down energy costs for all end-users. He also considered that a tax on the windfall profits made by certain energy companies could be useful in the current situation to mitigate the deterioration in public finances.

Lastly, he noted that, given the current situation, it would not be appropriate to activate the general or national escape clause in the EU economic governance framework. These mechanisms should be activated only in the event of a severe economic recession, whereas this was only a slowdown in growth at this stage. He stressed that the Commission would continue to monitor fiscal developments in the Member States and would propose appropriate measures, including as part of the European Semester cycle.

Mr JØRGENSEN then took stock of the EU’s energy situation. The EU imported around EUR 300 to 400 billion worth of fossil fuels every year, and the energy bill had already increased by almost EUR 20 billion since the start of the conflict in the Middle East. He pointed to the gap between these amounts and the resources available at EU level, with less than EUR 6 billion set aside for the energy strand of the Connecting Europe Facility in the current Multiannual Financial Framework.

However, he felt that the EU was in a better position to tackle this crisis than in 2022. The deployment of renewable energy and improvements in terms of energy efficiency had reduced the frequency with which gas determined the price of electricity from 70% of the time in 2022 to about 20-30% today. Supplies had also been diversified, but the EU nevertheless remained exposed to pressures on global gas prices.

Looking ahead, Mr JØRGENSEN outlined a range of scenarios in the context of the conflict in the Middle East, from a ceasefire to heightened tensions. He warned that, even in the most optimistic scenario, the stabilisation of the situation would be gradual and could take several years, particularly as far as liquefied natural gas (LNG) was concerned. The market was expected to become more favourable to buyers from the end of 2027, but this could be delayed by damage to infrastructure, which would take time to repair. With regard to oil, he felt that the situation could stabilise within a few weeks, but certain refined products, including kerosene and diesel, might remain subject to temporary pressures, given the longer delivery times.

As far as the EU's dependence on gas was concerned, he explained that the share of Russian gas in the EU's imports had dropped from around 45% in 2021 to 12% in 2025, thanks to a rapid diversification of supply sources. He noted that the United States was now one of the EU's main suppliers. He believed that transatlantic trade relations were embedded in a strong partnership and that the volumes imported stemmed from purchases made in the market and not from intergovernmental arrangements. To boost the EU's resilience, however, it was essential to consolidate and diversify the supplier portfolio for the long term. As regards oil, the situation was generally more under control, thanks to a more diversified supply chain.

Mr JØRGENSEN considered that the situation with regard to electricity was more positive, thanks to a high share of renewables and nuclear energy produced mainly in Europe. However, he reminded the College that electricity still accounted for only around 23% of final energy consumption and called for the electrification of households, transport and industry to be speeded up. Despite some progress, the

pace of electrification had failed to pick up in several sectors over the past decade, although the trend in the transport sector was more encouraging, due primarily to an increase in the number of electric vehicles.

He then presented the five lines of action set out in the Communication to be presented to the College on 22 April in response to the current energy challenges. The first line of action consisted of enhanced European coordination, in particular of gas storage filling before winter. Building on the work of the Gas Coordination Group and the Oil Coordination Group, the timing of Member States' purchases should be synchronised more closely to avoid price spikes linked to simultaneous purchases. By the same token, there should be a concerted approach to the release of oil stocks, in coordination with international partners. Finally, refining capacity needs should be anticipated on the basis of a mapping at EU level and the identification of collective measures to ensure access to refined products across the EU.

The second line of action involved cushioning the price shock for households and businesses through targeted and temporary measures. Mr JØRGENSEN warned against the temptation to use generalised tax cuts or subsidies for the purchase of fossil fuels. He recommended opting for schemes that supported households and businesses while offering incentives to reduce consumption and use alternatives. The Commission would support the Member States with coordinating measures, guidelines and a repository of good practices. He stressed the importance of addressing energy poverty, reminding the College that around 50 million EU citizens were unable to heat their homes properly. In addition, it was important to take steps to prevent energy cut-offs, facilitate switching to more favourable contracts and provide targeted support to vulnerable households. Lastly, he announced that a review of the national measures for taxing windfall profits would be carried out in order to assess the options, limitations and effects.

The third line of action targeted energy savings and demand reduction. Mr JØRGENSEN announced that the Commission would provide the

Member States with an overview of the most effective measures deployed during the 2022 crisis, from the rapid adoption of clean technologies to housing adaptations with immediate impact, via targeted incentives to switch to public transport and electric vehicles. He pointed out that no new legislative proposal was planned at this stage.

The fourth line of action was focused on speeding up the modernisation of the energy system by giving priority to the implementation of measures already proposed by the Commission. Mr JØRGENSEN expressed the hope that the co-legislators would adopt the grids package swiftly, ideally before the summer. He also insisted on the full application of the existing rules, including on interconnections, flexibility and the roll-out of smart meters. He announced that the Commission would adopt a tougher stance on late transposition, including by means of infringement procedures. He also stressed the need to make progress on the establishment of energy corridors and to support the Member States in the process of electrification and in the production of renewable gases such as biogas and biomethane. In this context, he announced that an ambitious action plan for speeding up electrification would be presented before the summer.

The fifth line of action concerned the mobilisation of investment, which was essential to the success of the other proposed measures. Mr JØRGENSEN proposed the organisation of a flagship summit on clean energy investment, bringing together major institutional, industrial and public investors. The aim of the summit would be to secure concrete commitments and direct funding towards quick impact measures, such as storage and batteries, charging infrastructure, electrification of industry and grid optimisation. In this context, he reminded the College of the recently presented strategy on investment in clean energy and the European Investment Bank's commitment of EUR 500 million. He pointed out that the Commission stood ready to help Member States mobilise available EU funding, in particular under cohesion policy or the Recovery and Resilience Facility, and stressed the importance of an effective State aid framework. He also mentioned upcoming work on network

charges, to better reflect costs depending on time periods and areas.

Lastly, he referred to the structure of energy bills. He explained that most of the emergency measures concerned the price of energy itself; taking rapid action on taxes and costs linked to electricity and gas networks was more difficult. He therefore called on the Member States to apply as soon as possible the guidelines already available to align certain network tariffs as closely as possible with actual costs, for example according to time of consumption or geographical area, which could help reduce bills. A more sustainable approach could then be considered at legislative level. Mr JØRGENSEN concluded by urging caution with regard to requests for preferential tariffs for certain industrial sectors, so as to maintain a balance with measures to protect households.

Mr HOEKSTRA stressed the need for the Commission to be prepared for all the scenarios mentioned previously and to continue to propose ambitious measures proportionate to the seriousness of the situation. More specifically, with regard to taxation, he stressed that all possible measures also had their limits and that they should be implemented in a timely, temporary and targeted manner. He referred in particular to three strands of tax policy measures on which the Commission's work was currently focused. The first concerned targeted VAT measures and the overall taxation of electricity and gas. The second strand concerned the taxation of windfall profits of certain energy companies – an approach whose legal, political and economic ramifications still needed to be examined in detail. Finally, the third strand concerned the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS), the review of which would be finalised later that year, so that the revenues generated by the system could be invested in the electrification of specific sectors.

More broadly, he called for European energy dependence to be reduced to put the EU in a position where it would not be at the mercy of geopolitical developments. He proposed that the Commission draw up an ambitious plan, in consultation with all stakeholders, to be submitted to the European Council. This plan should include elements such as the development of interconnectors, the commercial deployment of

small modular reactors (SMR) and the installation of EU-made solar energy generation facilities and heat pumps, which could in future supply electricity to some 20 million new European households per year. Lastly, this should be done through a combination of private and public funding aimed at significantly increasing energy production capacity in the EU over the next five years.

Ms RIBERA stressed the need to limit the devastating effects of the current conflict on European economy and society. She noted that every week that passed aggravated existing inequalities and weakened the European industrial fabric. She also noted that citizens, businesses and partners expected the EU to act decisively and consistently. The EU's credibility was at stake in its ability to respond to this crisis without sacrificing its principles, its single market or its green transition. She added that, in the context of the evolution of transatlantic relations, the EU's responsibility as a key player in a global system based on law and rules was growing, particularly in the face of the energy and climate crises.

She considered that the EU had the means to act, but only if it acted as one. She felt that the challenge was no longer political will, because there was consensus among European leaders, but the practical and coordinated implementation of the appropriate policies. In order to avoid 27 different responses, the governments of the Member States had to be given common tools, while leaving them the necessary room for manoeuvre to adapt the solutions to national realities, the ultimate objective being to protect the most vulnerable without fragmenting the European single market.

In this context, she stressed the importance of drawing lessons from past crises, in particular the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, which had highlighted the need for State aid to be flexible, targeted and temporary. She also noted that social benefits to support households was not considered State aid and therefore did not require prior notification to the Commission. On the other hand, support for companies must comply with a strict framework to avoid distortions of competition.

Ms RIBERA explained that the Commission was currently gathering the views of the Member States on a draft proposal for a State aid temporary crisis framework (CISAF) to support the EU economy in the context of the crisis in the Middle East. According to this proposal, priority aid would be given to the sectors most affected by the price surge, namely agriculture, fisheries, road transport and short sea shipping within the EU, which were strategic sectors where additional energy costs threatened European competitiveness and supply. She also mentioned a temporary support mechanism that would cover up to 50% of the additional fuel costs compared to the end of 2025, which could benefit around 50 000 companies in those sectors, with each application needing to be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that it was justified. She added that the intensity of State aid could be adjusted, for example by increasing the ceiling to 70% (instead of 50%) for large energy-intensive businesses, subject to strict conditions, in particular their commitment to the green transition.

Ms RIBERA stressed the importance of dialogue with the Member States, stating that many of them were already developing their own aid schemes under the CISAF temporary crisis framework and that it was important for the Commission to coordinate these initiatives well in order to avoid duplication and to identify any needs that were not being covered. She added that there was a clear cut-off date set for the end of 2026, as these measures were temporary and should not create dependency. A structured and sustainable response needed to be built through this dialogue that went beyond the current crisis and was an opportunity for the Commission to calibrate its responses, harmonise national approaches and prepare more robust legal tools for the future.

She called for a gradual and balanced approach, with a first short-term phase that would protect vulnerable sectors and households through targeted support. The second phase (the medium term) would aim to strengthen European energy resilience by diversifying supplies, speeding up the production of renewables, and increasing storage. In the third phase (the longer term), the aim would be to build

European industrial sovereignty, notably in green technologies, to reduce the EU's exposure to external shocks. Ms RIBERA concluded by saying that urgency and transition should not be opposed, as State aid should support European competitiveness in the present, while also speeding up the decarbonisation of tomorrow's economy, which was the only sustainable way to overcome recurring crises.

Mr FITTO then took the floor on behalf of Mr HANSEN, who was absent that day. He noted that the war in the Middle East was hitting European farmers and agri-food producers hard in several ways. He mentioned rocketing energy costs and the resulting increase in the prices of agro-diesel, gas and electricity, which were essential for heating, refrigeration and the operation of machinery. He pointed out that energy expenditure in the EU on fuels and fertilisers accounted for between 10 and 35% of agricultural production costs, depending on the Member State. He also mentioned cascading disruptions in the food chain, with risks of shortages of food packaging, food contact materials and feed additives and vitamins. Lastly, he referred to the unprecedented surge in fertiliser prices, pointing out that the increase in gas prices and the disruption of maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz had led to a 60% rise in nitrogen fertiliser costs compared with the average in 2024, and a 90-100% rise compared with 2020.

As a direct consequence, European farmers were coming under unsustainable financial pressure, which threatened farm profitability, EU agricultural production and, ultimately, food security. In the face of a crisis that was likely to drag on, there was an urgent need to act before the summer, as farmers usually ordered their nitrogen fertilisers for winter sowing in May and June. With prices too high for farmers to place an order, the EU risked seeing a drastic reduction in sown areas and a fall in yields next year. There was therefore an urgent need to address both fertiliser and energy costs by developing an action plan that could provide immediate and structural solutions.

Mr FITTO said that a high-level dialogue had been launched to find practical

solutions and that, that day, the Directorate-General for Agriculture was bringing together the fertiliser industry and farmers' representatives to explore possible ways forward. The conclusions of this dialogue would feed into the action plan on fertilisers, which would combine emergency measures and structural reforms. In terms of immediate measures, he explained that it was important to act quickly and decisively by making full use of existing tools. First, he mentioned direct financial support for farmers, pointing out that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reserve fund would not be sufficient, as climate risks were already weighing on budgets. He therefore suggested using part of the revenue from the carbon market (ETS) and the carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM) to offset additional costs for farmers, as the Social Climate Fund did with respect to ETS 2 for vulnerable households.

Mr FITTO then proposed to relax the rules to encourage the production of circular fertilisers by amending the Nitrates Directive and the Waste Framework Directive to allow wider use of digestates, manure and organic fertilisers and thereby adapt the rules to current agricultural realities. He also suggested increasing the transparency of the fertiliser market to ensure the proper functioning of the internal market and put an end to the anti-competitive practices of certain producers. Finally, he referred to (i) the development of biofuels and biogas, which required investment in infrastructure, particularly in terms of connection to the grid; (ii) support for biorefineries to produce more first and second generation biofuels and thereby reduce European dependencies and provide new sources of income for farmers; and (iii) the revision of the criteria for broadening the definitions of intermediate crops and degraded land and relaxing the certification requirements and thresholds laid down in the Renewable Energy Directive and the Fuel Quality Directive.

Mr FITTO also welcomed the ongoing work on a temporary State aid framework covering the agricultural sector. He believed that farmers should benefit from measures to mitigate the impact of energy costs, such as a possible tax on energy companies' windfall profits. He pointed out that a protracted energy crisis had to be

avoided, as it would lead to an increase in food prices that would be passed on to consumers and thus exacerbate inequalities in access to affordable food. In this context, he noted that the recent ceasefire and the potential reopening of the Strait of Hormuz raised the question of how fast fertiliser prices were likely to come down. Even if geopolitical tensions were eased, the market would remain tight, with limited supply, reduced accessibility and volatile prices, slowing down the return to normality.

Mr FITTO explained that, for Mr HANSEN, the long-term solution was to reduce dependencies. This solution required a European fertiliser production capacity, which would take time to develop, whereas circular fertilisers offered a more immediately available alternative. He stressed that any solution had to bring down prices for farmers, which was essential to avoid a collapse in production. He highlighted the need to act quickly, as the current crisis was not just a cyclical shock but a threat to Europe's food sovereignty. He concluded by noting that there were levers for action, including targeted financial support via the ETS and the CBAM, faster regulatory reform concerning circular fertilisers, increased transparency and fairness in the fertiliser market and, lastly, investment in biofuels and biogas.

Mr BRUNNER informed the College about the impact of the crisis in the field of security and migration. Starting with migration, he noted that there was currently no indication that the situation in Iran would generate a migratory flow to the EU. On the contrary, this particular migratory flow had been decreasing since the beginning of the conflict. If the situation were to change, the EU was better prepared than in the past, since it had since equipped itself with stronger tools and better coordination mechanisms. He explained that the EU was working closely with the Member States with a shared determination to retain control of the EU's external borders. He had written to EU Home Affairs Ministers to urge them to intensify migration diplomacy and prepare national systems for the implementation of the Pact on Migration and Asylum. He reported on the exchanges held with the ministers of the most exposed countries – Cyprus, Greece, Bulgaria, Croatia and Italy – who felt that

they were generally better equipped to manage the situation than ten years ago.

He stressed the importance of extending contacts beyond the EU's borders. In this regard, he reported on discussions with Türkiye, which had confirmed that there had been no significant increase in arrivals, but in fact a one-third decrease in the migratory flows since the beginning of the conflict, thanks notably to Türkiye's efforts to secure its borders with Iran and Iraq. He noted the need to continue the support provided by the EU, in particular through the SAFE instrument, which was a priority for Türkiye, as it would allow it to further secure its eastern border by means of high-tech surveillance infrastructure and equipment, which, in turn, was in the EU's interest.

Mr BRUNNER also reported on the close contacts with the relevant EU agencies with a view to providing enhanced support where necessary. Frontex stood ready to increase its operational support and deploy more officers to the Member States to help with aerial border surveillance, border checks and screening. For its part, the European Agency for Asylum was ready to increase the number of interpreters available. Lastly, he mentioned the support that could come from international organisations, in particular the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration, which were willing to help.

He then turned to the issues relating to security and the threat of domestic terrorism, noting that the recent escalation in the Middle East represented a challenge for the EU's internal security. He explained that Europol had warned of the risk of radicalisation on European soil of individual actors or small spontaneous cells and of threats from Iranian proxies acting through criminal networks or sleeper cells. These individuals or groups could prepare or finance terrorist or cyber attacks and manipulate information. Their potential targets could include US, Israeli or Jewish interests, but also EU public places and critical infrastructure. He noted in this regard that there had already been several incidents targeting Jewish communities and American interests in Belgium, the Netherlands, Greece and Czechia, without however resulting in casualties. The EU was stepping up its preparedness for such

risks through the implementation of the ProtectEU strategy and with funding specifically dedicated to protecting public spaces, including Jewish places of interest.

Finally, Mr BRUNNER pointed out that the new entry-exit system, which had been fully operational since 10 April at all EU border crossing points, was one of the strongest tools for protecting the general public. Over the six months of its gradual roll-out, the system had recorded more than 50 million entries and exits and resulted in more than 27 000 refusals of entry, including 700 on security grounds. He considered this system a major asset for the EU in the context of managing the fallout from the conflict in the Middle East.

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

- the immediate and major impact of the war in the Middle East on the EU's economy and security and on the daily lives of people in Europe, especially as a result of rising energy prices, supply chain disruptions and increased uncertainty;
- the risk that the crisis could drive up inflation and slow down growth, with potential social and political consequences, including on public order, thus requiring a balanced and credible policy response;
- the need to combine short-term emergency measures with a clear and faster-paced strategy for the long term, in particular to change the energy mix and strengthen the EU's overall resilience;
- the need to step up engagement with partners in the region, address the root causes of instability and support efforts to stabilise the political, economic and security situation, including in Lebanon, Syria and the EU's wider neighbourhood;

- the short-term challenge posed by volatile energy prices, more so than immediate shortages, as well as possible supply disruption should the crisis continue;
- the significant disparities between Member States in terms of energy dependency and energy prices, with calls for flexibility and targeted support measures at national level;
- a consensus on the need to move faster towards energy independence through decarbonisation, diversifying suppliers and ramping up European production, via renewables and nuclear;
- the observation that structural vulnerabilities went beyond energy and also included key raw materials and industrial inputs, including chemicals, metals, semiconductors and fertilisers, and calls to strengthen circularity and increase recycling and domestic production capacity;
- support for the short-term crisis responses, including temporary State aid flexibility, financial support for the sectors most affected, such as transport, fisheries and tourism, as well as better monitoring of fuel supply and strategic reserves;
- concerns about the knock-on effects of the crisis, including the risks of food insecurity, migratory pressures and further regional destabilisation, as well as the need to seize the opportunities arising to strengthen partnerships, particularly with Türkiye and countries in the Caucasus;
- the significant humanitarian consequences of the conflict, including large-scale population displacement, as well as the pressure on the EU's thinly stretched humanitarian resources;
- defence and security implications, particularly in terms of Western production capacity, the growing global competition for military resources and the need to

strengthen the European defence industrial base and its strategic enablers;

- recognition of the growing importance of hybrid and cyber threats, vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure such as submarine cables and data centres, as well as the strategic role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence;
- warnings against introducing additional tax or regulatory burdens that could further increase costs for consumers and businesses;
- the crucial importance of global trade and freedom of navigation, given the EU's dependence on maritime routes, and the need to safeguard supply chains and maintain open trade relations while managing geopolitical risks;
- a call to improve coordination, preparedness and crisis management at EU level, incorporating risk assessment, contingency planning and more communication with the general public.

The PRESIDENT wrapped up the debate by appreciating the efforts made to implement the Pact on Migration and Asylum. She emphasized the need for close monitoring to ensure that the system was genuinely operational and commensurate with the challenges being faced.

With regard to the economic situation, she reaffirmed the principle of timely, temporary and targeted measures, taking the view that the urgency of the situation should not lead to inefficient spending, nor result in mechanisms that were difficult to adjust. She noted that the crisis was not only affecting the global oil and gas markets, but was also a test for the operation of the electricity market. She therefore called for decarbonisation efforts to continue and for homegrown energy sources to be developed more quickly in order to bolster Europe's autonomy and prevent price volatility. She welcomed the fact that the EU had alternatives to fossil fuels through nuclear power and renewables, and stressed the need for continued investment, particularly in grids and interconnections. With this in mind, she highlighted the

mid-term review of cohesion policy and its contribution to European priorities.

Lastly, the PRESIDENT expressed her deep concern about the deteriorating security situation and felt that the issues raised required responses at the highest level, especially given the potential implications in terms of European solidarity. In her view, it was crucial for the Commission to keep the situation in the Middle East under constant review and to develop responses that addressed both urgent and long-term requirements. She reminded the meeting that the Commission Communication on energy would be approved by the College on 22 April, the day before the informal European Council in Cyprus, to provide the basis for EU leaders' discussions.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

COMMISSION REPLY TO A RESOLUTION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT UNDER ARTICLE 225 OF THE TREATY ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION (TFEU) – 28TH REGIME: A NEW LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR INNOVATIVE COMPANIES (SP(2026) 104)

Mr McGRATH presented to the College the draft reply to a legislative initiative resolution under Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), adopted by the European Parliament at its January 2026 plenary meeting.

This reply followed on from the Commission's legislative proposal on the 'EU Inc.' framework, adopted on 18 March 2026, which was a central part of the broader 28th regime initiative. The European Parliament had called for an ambitious and uniform EU-wide framework for businesses to be put in place, preferably through a Regulation, and had supported the use of Articles 50 and 114 TFEU as the legal basis. The Commission's proposal for a Regulation broadly converged with these

views, including on key aspects such as simpler, digital procedures for creating companies, a single point of registration in the EU, flexible structures, as well as measures to support start-ups and scale-ups, including employee stock options.

Mr McGRATH stressed that the Commission's approach was broadly in line with the European Parliament's recommendations, and that MEPs and representatives of the Member States had so far welcomed the proposal put forward by the Commission. The Commission would continue to engage with the co-legislators and, given the overall alignment between the institutions, hoped to secure an agreement by the end of 2026.

Following this presentation, the Commission approved the line proposed in SP(2026) 104, including the letter to be sent by Mr ŠEFČOVIČ to the European Parliament.

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The meeting closed at 11.48.