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DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**on Former Commissioner Thierry Breton's post term of office professional collaboration
with LCI television channel**

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on European Union,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to the Treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community,

Having regard to the Commission Decision of 31 January 2018 (C(2018) 700 final) on a Code of Conduct for the Members of the European Commission, and in particular Article 11(3) thereof,

Whereas:

- 1) According to the second paragraph of Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the Members of the Commission, when entering upon their duties, shall give a solemn undertaking that, both during and after their term of office, they will respect the obligations arising therefrom and, in particular, their duty to behave with integrity and discretion as regards the acceptance, after they have ceased to hold office, of certain appointments or benefits.
- 2) Article 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union provides that the Members of the institutions of the Union shall be required, even after their duties have ceased, not to disclose information of any kind covered by the obligation of professional secrecy, in particular information about undertakings, their business relations or their cost components.
- 3) Article 11 of the Code of Conduct for the Members of the European Commission establishes a specific procedure for the assessment of planned professional activities which the Members or former Members of the Commission intend to take up after they have ceased to hold office. The Commission shall examine the information provided in order to determine whether the nature of the planned activity is compatible with Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. If the planned activity is related to the portfolio of the Member or former Member, the Commission shall decide only after having consulted the Independent Ethical Committee unless the planned activity falls within the exceptions set out in paragraph 3, second subparagraph, litt. (a) to (f).

- 4) On 14 July 2025, Former Commissioner Breton informed the Commission of his intention to accept a remunerated assignment for a weekly collaboration with the French television channel LCI, consisting of commenting, in several forms ⁽¹⁾, topics related to current political, economic and societal subjects and challenges. Former Commissioner Breton is expected to intervene, during around 40 minutes, in LCI's Sunday evening programmes (currently unlabelled) to be held between 6 pm and 8 pm.
- 5) Former Commissioner Breton's portfolio covered the digital economy and society. Under this part of his portfolio, Former Commissioner Breton held political responsibility over DG CNECT, which is notably in charge of the regulation of the media and of the digital single market, including the strengthening of EU tools to prevent and counter disinformation and fake information online, while preserving freedom of expression, freedom of the press and media pluralism.
- 6) Former Commissioner Breton's envisaged activity is *per se* not related to the regulatory aspects of media and does not include a management or an advice function to any media companies. It appeared nevertheless that this activity could be indirectly linked to his former Commission portfolio. Against this background, given the doubt regarding the link with Former Commissioner Breton's former portfolio, the Independent Ethical Committee's opinion was requested on 24 September 2025 in accordance with Article 11(3) of the Code of Conduct for the Members of the European Commission, on the compatibility of this activity with Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.
- 7) The Committee delivered its opinion on 6 October 2025. The Committee first established the relevant facts on LCI, notably on its activities, governance structure and funding, then regarding the nature of Former Commissioner Breton envisaged activity, and then concerning the links between LCI and the European Commission. The Committee then assessed the legal context applicable and drew its conclusions on the compatibility of the envisaged activity vis-à-vis the legal context.
- 8) The Committee noted that LCI (short for *La Chaîne Info* – 'The News Channel'), is a French 24-hour news TV channel, launched in 1994, covering national and international news, debates, analysis and commentary. The Committee observed that LCI was originally created by the TF1 Group, as the first continuous news broadcaster in France. Initially launched as a pay-TV channel, LCI became free-to-air on digital terrestrial television in 2016. The Committee highlighted that LCI belongs to the French Company TF1 SA. The French industrial group Bouygues SA holds a controlling stake in TF1 SA.

⁽¹⁾ Former Commissioner Breton's notification mentions : '*Éditoriaux, chroniques, décryptages liés à l'actualité notamment politique, économique et des grands enjeux de société et à l'analyse de ces derniers*'.

- 9) As regards LCI's activities, the Committee noted that LCI operates as a general-interest news channel, with programming that spans political, economic, international, social and cultural news. It broadcasts a mix of live news segments, in-depth debate shows, thematic magazines and special reports. Its editorial strategy gives significant space to political dialogue, current affairs analysis, expert commentary and long-form interviews. One of its declared features is a strong emphasis on fact-checking, with a dedicated unit responsible for verifying claims made in public discourse. The Committee noted that the channel also frequently covers parliamentary activity, European affairs, public health issues and climate-related topics.
- 10) As regards LCI's governance, the Committee noted that LCI is part of the TF1 group and its news division is integrated with TF1 Info, which oversees both TF1 and LCI's news output. The editorial governance of LCI falls under the broader structure of the TF1 group's news division. The channel is led by senior editors and journalists under the supervision of TF1's Director of News. A centralised editorial board coordinates daily programming and ensures compliance with journalistic ethics and French broadcasting regulations.
- 11) The Committee noted that since becoming free-to-air in 2016, LCI began generating revenue through advertising, which is its main source of revenue. LCI is wholly owned by TF1 SA, which is responsible for financing it. TF1 SA is funded almost entirely by commercial revenues, primarily generated through advertising.
- 12) The Committee took note of Former Commissioner Breton's intention to engage in a paid assignment for a weekly collaboration with LCI. This collaboration would consist in commenting topics related to current political, economic and societal subjects and challenges. This would involve editorials, commentaries and in-depth analysis on current affairs. Former Commissioner Breton is expected to intervene, during around 40 minutes, in LCI's Sunday evening programmes to be held between 18.00 and 20.00.
- 13) The Committee underlined that LCI and TF1 SA are not registered in the Transparency Register of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission. The Committee noted nevertheless that Bouygues (more precisely Bouygues Europe, encompassing Bouygues SA), which controls LCI through its stake in TF1 SA, is registered in the Transparency Register. According to the Transparency Register, Bouygues Europe held regular meetings with Former Commissioner Breton and its Cabinet in the past years.
- 14) Based on publicly available information, the Committee finally highlighted that there is no indication that LCI receives funding from the European Union, yet noting that LCI is nonetheless subject to the EU audiovisual and competition rule applicable to it.

- 15) The Committee then recalled the legal framework applicable to the assessment of the post term of office activities of former Members of the Commission and eventually concluded on the restrictions and conditions deemed necessary in order to ensure the compatibility of Former Commissioner Breton's envisaged activity with Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.
- 16) As a preliminary consideration, the Committee noted that former Members of the Commission have a right to engage in work and to pursue a freely chosen or accepted occupation after the term of their office. This right needs to be balanced with the obligations set out in Article 245 TFEU and the Code of Conduct for the Members of the European Commission, which develops these obligations in more detail.
- 17) The Committee underlined that Former Commissioner Breton's envisaged activity consists in providing commentary on current affairs. This role does not involve any lobbying or responsibilities in securing funding for LCI.
- 18) The Committee further took the view that the link of this activity with Former Commissioner Breton's portfolio (Internal Market) is merely indirect. Commissioner Breton held political responsibility for the regulation of the media and the digital single market. However, providing commentary on current affairs is, as such, not directly linked to Former Commissioner Breton's past responsibilities.
- 19) This led the Committee to consider that Former Commissioner Breton's envisaged activity does not represent a risk with regard to the interests of the Commission and the European Union and to conclude that it is compatible with Article 245 TFEU.
- 20) The Committee considered nevertheless that Former Commissioner Breton should assess the context, circumstances and scope of each television appearance to fully ascertain its compatibility with: (1) the principles of integrity and discretion set out in Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; (2) Article 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union; and (3) Article 11(1) of the Code of Conduct for the Members of the Commission, in conjunction with Article 5 of the Code, namely the compliance with the duties of collegiality and discretion with respect to the Commission's decisions and activities during his term office.
- 21) The Committee furthermore recommended that the Commission decision should recall that, according to Article 13(2) of the Code of Conduct, former Members of the Commission shall inform the President in a timely manner if they have doubts with regard to the application of this Code before acting on the matter relating to which the doubts arise.
- 22) The Commission has considered the Committee's opinion and shares its conclusions.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

Former Commissioner Breton's envisaged post term of office professional collaboration with LCI television channel is compatible with Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, subject to the respect of the conditions and restrictions set out in Articles 2 and 3.

Article 2

Former Commissioner Breton shall assess the context, circumstances and scope of each television appearance with a view to fully ascertaining its compatibility with:

- the principles of integrity and discretion set out in Article 245 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union;
- Article 339 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and
- Article 11(1) of the Code of Conduct for the Members of the Commission, in conjunction with Article 5 of the Code.

Article 3

In line with Article 13(2) of the Code of Conduct for the Members of the Commission, Former Commissioner Breton shall inform the President of the Commission, in a timely manner, if and when he has a doubt with regard to the application of the present Decision or the Code of Conduct, before acting on the matter relating to which the doubts arise.

Done at Brussels, on 12 November 2025.

The President
Ursula von der Leyen