

Commissioner Thierry Breton mission to Austin, Texas – 8/9 May 2022

Mission report

Out of scope



Meeting with Elon Musk and [REDACTED]

EU industry and tech Commissioner Thierry Breton and multi-company CEO Elon Musk met at the Tesla gigafactory in Austin, Texas, on Monday 9 May.

Ahead of the EU-US Tech and Trade Council, they exchanged on a wide range of important issues of mutual interest regarding automotive (including batteries and raw materials, semiconductors, connected cars), the importance of resilient supply chains, and the need for a favourable regulatory and investment environment in Europe.

On raw materials specifically, Elon Musk described lithium as the new oil and expressed concerns about the risk posed by the EU's and US's dependence on imports from third countries, mostly China. Whilst Tesla mainly sources lithium from Australia, it currently depends on China for processing. Building refining capacities domestically or in like-minded countries is essential given the risk of one country having an unmovable piece – “the modern equivalent of war”.

They also exchanged on sustainable energy, with Elon Musk underlining the importance of renewables and nuclear.

Together with [REDACTED], SpaceX [REDACTED], Commissioner Breton and Elon Musk exchanged on space constellations, orbit congestion and space-based connectivity, especially in the context of Starlink contributing to connectivity in Ukraine.

On social media, they had a constructive exchange on the impact of the recently adopted EU Digital Services Act on online platforms in areas such as freedom of speech, algorithm transparency, or user responsibility, which Thierry Breton and Elon Musk summarised in a short video posted on Commissioner Breton's Twitter account.