



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2008)1827 final

Brussels, 30 April 2008

MINUTES

of the 1827th meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 22 April 2008

(afternoon)

PV(2008)1827 final

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Single sitting: Tuesday 22 April 2008 (afternoon)

The sitting was opened at 13.18 hours by Ms WALLSTRÖM, President BARROSO being absent.

Present:

Ms WALLSTRÖM	Vice-President
Mr VERHEUGEN	Vice-President
Mr BARROT	Vice-President
Mr KALLAS	Vice-President
Ms REDING	
Mr ALMUNIA	
Mr BORG	
Mr FIGEL'	
Mr REHN	
Mr MICHEL	
Ms KROES ¹	
Ms KUNEVA	
Mr ORBAN	
Ms VASSILIOU	

¹ Throughout the meeting Ms KROES took part in the Commission's discussions by telephone.

Absent:

Mr BARROSO

President

Mr FRATTINI

Vice-President

Mr DIMAS

Ms HÜBNER

Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ

Mr POTOČNIK

Mr KOVÁCS

Ms FISCHER BOEL

Ms FERRERO-WALDNER

Mr McCREEVY

Mr ŠPIDLA

Mr MANDELSON

Mr PIEBALGS

The following sat in to represent absent Members of the Commission:

Mr SCHELLEKENS	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr DIMAS
Mr NEALE	A member of Mr POTOČNIK's staff
Mr FRIIS	A member of Ms FISCHER BOEL's staff
Ms PÉREZ-MINAYO	A member of Mr ŠPIDLA's staff
Mr PETERS	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr MANDELSON
Ms SOEWARTA	A member of Mr PIEBALGS's staff

The following also sat in:

Mr THEBAULT	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Ms DURAND	Acting Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr SØRENSEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr SELMAYR	Commission Spokesman - DG Communication	
Ms CARVALHO	Bureau of European Policy Advisers	
Mr COSTELLO	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms WALLSTRÖM	
Mr FORAX	A member of Ms REDING's staff	Item 8
Mr MONOD DE FROIDEVILLE	A member of Ms KROES's staff	

Secretary: Ms DAY, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms Laurence BURGOD-BARRIER and Mr João THEMUDO BARATA, administrators in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2008)1827/3; SEC(2008)482/2)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(SEC(2008)1827)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 21 April.

The Secretary-General announced that the decisions referred to under items 7 and 8 of these minutes would be adopted by the Commission by "finalisation" written procedures, the time limits for which had been set at Wednesday 23 April and Tuesday 22 April respectively.

3. MINUTES OF 1826TH MEETING (16 APRIL)

(PV(2008)1827)

Approval of the minutes of the 1826th meeting of the Commission was postponed for one week.

4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

4.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2008)483 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 14 and 18 April.

4.2. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2008)484)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 21 and 25 April.

4.3. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2008)485 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 14 and 18 April.

4.4. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation procedure between 14 and 18 April, as archived in "Grefte 2000" (Registry).

5. TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR WELL-BEING AT WORK AT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION – MULTI-ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2006-2009 – MID-TERM REPORT

(SEC(2008)495 TO /3, SEC(2008)496)

The Commission took note of the mid-term report in SEC(2008)495/3.

6. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (SEC(2008)481)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group held on Friday 18 April (SEC(2008)481).

It paid particular attention to the following:

6.1. *LEGISLATIVE MATTERS*

i) Preparation of the Special Committee on Agriculture (CSA) (Brussels, 5 May) and the May I part-session of Parliament (point 1.3 of the IRG record)

- Common rules for direct support schemes under the common agricultural policy and establishing certain support schemes for farmers, as regards the aid scheme for cotton (Council Regulation) – GKLAVAKIS report – 2007/0242 (CNS)

The Commission authorised Ms FISCHER BOEL to support a Council Presidency compromise at the Special Committee on Agriculture on 5 May, following the line set out in SI(2008)240, and to adopt the same line at Parliament's May I 2008 part-session in order to reach political agreement.

6.2. *RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL*

ii) Programming of Council business (SI(2008)223)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2008)223 on the Council meetings between 17 and 30 April.

iii) Results of Council meeting (Justice and Home Affairs) (Brussels, 18 April)

(SI(2008)249; SEC(2008)530)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr BARROT in SEC(2008)530.

iv) Results of the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for competitiveness (Brdo, 14-16 April)

Mr VERHEUGEN reported on the main results of the informal meeting of Ministers responsible for competitiveness, held in Brdo from 14 to 16 April. He stressed the interest Ministers had shown in the "Small Business Act" for Europe and the desirability of holding a Commission policy debate on the subject as soon as possible. He mentioned in particular the major changes which the Small Business Act would bring to the day-to-day reality of millions of companies, and its potential to promote Europe's competitiveness.

He also noted the attention Ministers had paid to the initiative for promoting sustainable industry, taking into account the energy efficiency of products and the way in which they affected the environment. This initiative was widely supported by industry itself.

Lastly, he mentioned the Transatlantic Economic Council meeting which was to be held for the first time in Brussels in a few weeks' time and for which the agenda was already full. In this connection he stressed the urgent need to find a solution to the question of poultry imports from the United States in order to make the most of the potential offered by this transatlantic forum.

Replying to certain questions on the relationship between the Transatlantic Council and the work of the Commission, Mr VERHEUGEN announced his intention to prepare for a future Commission meeting an information note explaining in detail how this dialogue with the EU's American partners operated.

Ms KROES noted the attention which the European Ministers responsible for competitiveness had paid to the question of venture capital at their informal meeting in Brdo.

With reference to the Transatlantic Economic Council, Ms KROES mentioned the proposal by the United Kingdom to mobilise individual efforts to bring Europe and the United States closer together as regards the degree of involvement of women in corporate management.

The Commission took note of this information.

v) Economic and Financial Affairs (Brussels, 14 May)

(point 2.4 of the IRG record)

- Undertaking by the Commission to inform the Council as regards good governance in the tax field in the context of relations with third countries

The Commission authorised Mr KOVÁCS, at the Council meeting (Economic and Financial Affairs) on 14 May, on behalf of the Commission, to take note of the Council conclusions and to make a joint statement with the Council and a unilateral Commission statement, following the line set out in SI(2008)246.

6.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

vi) Preparation of April II part-session of Parliament – Non-legislative matters

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Vote on the discharge to the Commission for implementation of the budget for the 2006 financial year

Mr KALLAS reported on Parliament's vote on the discharge to the Commission for implementation of the 2006 budget. He was pleased to report that the considerable efforts made by the Commission and its departments had led to a record 582 votes in favour of the discharge to the Commission.

He outlined briefly the various stages in the discharge procedure, which was now complete, and the salient points on which Parliament had focused its attention in recent months. He also mentioned certain audits in progress within Parliament and the problems concerning the agencies.

Lastly, Mr KALLAS pointed out that the excellent result obtained by the Commission for the 2006 discharge in no way relieved its departments of the need to pursue their efforts, as the next discharge procedure would be the last to be completed during the present Commission's term of office.

Ms WALLSTRÖM endorsed Mr KALLAS' views and concluded that the excellent result had been secured as a result of the Commission truly taking collective charge of the dossier. She also insisted on the importance of pursuing efforts for the next financial year.

The Commission took note of this information.

- Commission statement – Implementation of the Directive on the posting of workers following judgments by the Court of Justice

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2008)2432/3.

- QO O-0031/2008 – Zero tolerance regime for unauthorised GMOs and economic consequences thereof

The Commission approved the draft answer in SP(2008)2433/2.

vii) Preparation of the April II part-session of Parliament – Oral questions

(point 3.4 of the IRG record)

H-0155/08, H-0156/08, H-0157/08, H-0158/08, H-0160/08, H-0162/08, H-0164/08 and H-0177/08, H-0166/08, H-0168/08, H-0170/08, H-0172/08, H-0174/08, H-0175/08, H-0179/08, H-0181/08, H-0183/08, H-0185/08, H-0188/08, H-0190/08, H-0193/08, H-0195/08, H-0197/08, H-0199/08, H-0201/08, H-0202/08, H-0204/08, H-0206/08, H-0207/08, H-0208/08,

H-0209/08, H-0211/08, H-0212/08, H-0214/08, H-0216/08, H-0217/08, H-0218/08, H-0219/08, H-0221/08, H-0223/08, H-0225/08, H-0226/08, H-0227/08, H-0228/08, H-0229/08, H-0230/08, H-0231/08, H-0232/08, H-0234/08, H-0235/08, H-0237/08, H-0239/08, H-0240/08, H-0241/08, H-0243/08, H-0244/08, H-0246/08, H-0247/08, H-0249/08, H-0251/08, H-0254/08, H-0256/08, H-0258/08, H-0260/08, H-0262/08, H-0264/08, H-0266/08

The Commission approved the draft answers in SP(2008)2135 to /4, following the agreement reached between the Chefs de cabinet on revisions of certain draft answers, set out in SP(2008)2135/5 *et seq.*

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2008)486)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2008)70)

EUROSTAT – APPOINTMENT OF AD15/16 DIRECTOR-GENERAL (EU-27)

(PERS(2007)82 TO /6)

Mr KALLAS referred to the qualifications and professional experience of Mr Walter Josef RADERMACHER, the candidate he was proposing to select, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr ALMUNIA.

Mr ALMUNIA spelled out the specific characteristics of the function and the challenges awaiting the new Director-General of Eurostat. In particular he stressed the important coordinating role played by Eurostat at the heart of the European statistical systems and the prospects for developing cooperation between Eurostat and the relevant bodies within the United Nations with a view to harmonising the statistical systems used.

The Commission took note of this information and of the fact that the decision in question would be adopted by "finalisation" written procedure, the time limit for which was set at Wednesday 23 April (E/720/2008).

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON THE PROTECTION OF CONSUMERS, IN PARTICULAR MINORS, IN RESPECT OF THE USE OF VIDEO GAMES
(COM(2008)207 A /3; SEC(2008)487)**

Ms REDING presented the Communication on the use of video games (COM(2008)207/3), which was scheduled to be approved by the Commission via the "finalisation" written procedure on Tuesday 22 April 2008 (E/718/2008).

Ms KUNEVA and Mr BARROT had provided invaluable assistance in preparing the Communication, the latter in the context of his current responsibilities in the field of justice, freedom and security.

Ms REDING explained that not only children but also young adults in Europe and throughout the world spend a significant amount of their leisure time playing video games and discussed the economic importance of this rapidly growing market and the weight of this sector in European industry.

She discussed the link between the games, which are cultural products, and the freedom of expression issue, as well as the games' significant societal impact. It was particularly important to protect children and young people from the intense violence of certain games by establishing a suitable classification system and providing parents and grandparents with appropriate information.

Ms REDING also pointed out that the Communication was a follow-up to the first step taken in this area in 2002 with the Council Resolution on the protection of

consumers through the labelling of certain games according to age group, inviting the Commission to report on the various methods for the assessment of the contents of video games as well as for their rating and labelling.

Regarding progress since that time, she drew attention to the work completed regarding the PEGI self-regulation initiative (*Pan European Games Information System*), which was today recognised and applied by 20 Member States and which was functioning satisfactorily. She regretted, however, that most persons who play video games were not aware of the system, which the sector should promote more effectively.

She described the particular manner in which online gaming functioned, given the various possibilities for control and intervention available to users. Consequently, it was very difficult to, for example, monitor the level of violence in such games, which are constantly evolving. The need for continuous follow-up had led to the creation of the PEGI-Online system, which was set up in 2006 but was still not used by the sector to the degree necessary.

Because the best classification system is ineffectual if it remains unknown and unapplied, Ms REDING highlighted the dual aim of better informing parents and obtaining a commitment from video game manufacturers and distributors to set up, within two years, a code of conduct governing the sale of such games to minors. She concluded by stating that her departments would closely monitor the preparation of the code of conduct.

Ms KUNEVA stressed the importance of the work that had been carried out, which was an example of a policy that focused on the interests of consumers. The measures that had been taken were an important beginning, because they increased the information available to consumers, which gave them the ability to make fully informed choices when purchasing video games.

In her view, this aspect was even more important given that the video game market targets children, the most vulnerable consumers, and she was pleased with the cooperative arrangements that had been set up with the sector in this respect.

She also described the rapid growth in the sector, which made Ms REDING's initiative even more timely. Ms REDING and Mr BARROT had her thanks, as did the departments responsible for justice, freedom and security matters.

Ms WALLSTRÖM highlighted the importance of this issue, which affected all parents confronted with the unprecedented violence in certain games. This violence was omnipresent and, unfortunately, insufficiently counterbalanced by the offer of intelligent games on the market. Equality between the sexes was also absent in these games, and she wondered whether it would be possible to encourage the creation of higher-quality games that took into account gender issues, for example by awarding a prize.

Ms REDING acknowledged the potential merit of awarding prizes for intelligent video games but also stated that this type of initiative brought with it administrative difficulties. She did agree that it would be useful to examine this approach, in view of the financing possibilities available under the MEDIA programme to support the creation of game scenarios.

She concurred that the quality of many games was poor but was forced to acknowledge that such games were very popular with young people. In her opinion, it was important that adults who buy games for their children or grandchildren are aware of what they are in fact buying. It was extremely regrettable that minors were able to easily purchase games meant for ages 18 and up.

She raised the issue of banning the sale of certain games, much as many Member States forbade the sale of specific products, but considered that the code of conduct would provide an adequate solution.

Regarding equality between the sexes, better-quality, less-violent games did exist, but were less known to the general public. Such games could indeed benefit from initiatives to promote them.

Regarding internet content more generally, she mentioned the ongoing projects under the Safer Internet Programme, in particular the measures taken with Europol

and Interpol to locate illegal and harmful content, and the awareness campaigns that had taken place, such as the Safer Internet Day, which were proving increasingly successful in numerous countries.

To be effective, however, all actions required a commitment by the sector itself. Therefore, drafting a code of good conduct and posting it in shops would constitute an essential element of progress in this area.

Mr KUNEVA expressed her concern regarding the violent content of certain games; because certain children have significant amounts of money to spend, better information and parental control would continue to be vitally important.

The Commission also mentioned the difficulty of verifying that distributors respected the recommended age limits and the problem of young persons' swapping of games without any supervision regarding age. It was therefore important to increase parental and distributor awareness of the risks associated with the excessive violence of certain games.

The Commission took note of this information.

9. RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

9.1. SITUATION IN ZIMBABWE – DISCUSSION AT THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC) SUMMIT (MAURITIUS, 19 AND 20 APRIL) (SEC(2008)528)

Mr MICHEL briefly described the political crisis that was rocking Zimbabwe and reported on the discussions on this subject at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) summit held in Mauritius on 19 to 20 April.

(22 April 2008)

He relayed the views expressed by various governments on the current electoral process in Zimbabwe and the position adopted by the SADC in this regard. He emphasised the importance of the issues raised in relation to the political situation in Zimbabwe and also mentioned the situation in other African countries.

The SADC member countries needed to play an active a role as possible in order to secure a return to political normality in Zimbabwe.

The Commission took note of these observations and of the note from Mr MICHEL distributed as SEC(2008)528.

**9.2. VISIT TO THE GULF COUNTRIES (SAUDI ARABIA, BAHRAIN AND QATAR , 14-17 APRIL)
(SEC(2008)529)**

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms FERRERO-WALDNER in SEC(2008)529.

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The meeting closed at 14.36 hours.