



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2014) 2097 final

- English language version of the French text which is authentic -

Brussels, 1 October 2014

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2097th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 10 September 2014

(morning)

PV(2014) 2097 final

- English language version of the French text which is authentic -

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance list	4-6
1. AGENDAS (OJ(2014) 2097/FINAL; SEC(2014) 459/2).....	7
2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET (RCC(2014) 2097).....	7
3. MINUTES OF 2096 TH MEETING (3 SEPTEMBER) (PV(2014) 2096)	7
4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS.....	7
4.1. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL	7
4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, THE EUROPEAN OMBUDSMAN AND NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS.....	8
5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS.....	9
5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2014) 460 ET SEQ.).....	9
5.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2014) 461 ET SEQ)	9
5.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2014) 462 ET SEQ).....	9
5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2014) 463)	9
5.5. DELEGATION OF POWERS FOR THE ADOPTION OF MEASURES RELATED TO CERTAIN MATTERS PROVIDED FOR IN ARTICLE 9(1)(a) OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EEC) 2658/87 CONCERNING THE CLASSIFICATION OF GOODS IN THE COMBINED NOMENCLATURE (C(2014) 6297).....	9
6. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EC) 726/2004 LAYING DOWN COMMUNITY PROCEDURES FOR	

THE AUTHORISATION AND SUPERVISION OF MEDICINAL PRODUCTS FOR HUMAN AND VETERINARY USE AND ESTABLISHING A EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY (COM(2014) 557 AND /2; RCC(2014) 72).....	10
7. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON THE MANUFACTURE, PLACING ON THE MARKET AND USE OF MEDICATED FEED AND REPEALING COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 90/167/EEC (COM(2014) 556 AND /2; SWD(2014) 271; SWD(2014) 272 AND /2; SEC(2014) 465; RCC(2014) 72).....	10
8. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON VETERINARY MEDICINAL PRODUCTS (COM(2014) 558 AND /2; SWD(2014) 273; SWD(2014) 274; SEC(2014) 466; RCC(2014) 72)	11
9. INTERIM REPORT ON THE BUDGET OF THE EUROPEAN UNION – SHORTFALL IN PAYMENT APPROPRIATIONS (SEC(2014) 478).....	11
10. RELATIONS WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES.....	21
PREPARATION OF THE COMMUNICATION ON THE ENLARGEMENT STRATEGY AND MAIN CHALLENGES IN 2014-2015.....	21

Single sitting: Wednesday 10 September 2014 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.07 with Mr BARROSO, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr BARROSO	President	
Mr KALLAS	Vice-President	
Ms KROES	Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr BARNIER	Vice-President	Items 9 (in part) and 10
Mr OETTINGER	Vice-President	
Mr KATAINEN	Vice-President	
Mr PIEBALGS	Member	
Mr ŠEMETA	Member	
Ms GEORGIEVA	Member	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms HEDEGAARD	Member	
Mr FÜLE	Member	
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member	
Mr CIOLOŞ	Member	
Mr BORG	Member	
Mr MIMICA	Member	
Mr NELLI FEROCI	Member	
Ms REICHERTS	Member	
Mr DOMINIK	Member	

Absent:

Baroness ASHTON	High Representative / Vice-President
Mr ALMUNIA	Vice-President
Mr POTOČNIK	Member
Ms VASSILIOU	Member
Mr DE GUCHT	Member
Ms GEOGHEGAN-QUINN	Member
Ms DAMANAKI	Member
Mr ANDOR	Member

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

Mr CEBALLOS BARÓN	A member of Baroness ASHTON's staff
Mr NAVEA	A member of Mr ALMUNIA's staff
Ms CAREMIER	Adviser in Mr POTOČNIK's office
Mr SEVERIS	A member of Ms VASSILIOU's staff
Mr FORBES	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms GEOGHEGAN-QUINN
Mr INOTAI	A member of Ms DAMANAKI's staff
Ms TÖRÖK	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr ANDOR

The following also sat in:

Mr LAITENBERGER	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr PAULGER	Director-General, DG Communication	Items 1 to 9
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Commission Spokeswoman	
Ms BENÍTEZ SALAS	Bureau of European Policy Advisers	
Mr SOBRAL	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	Item 9 (in part)
Mr KLAUS	A member of the PRESIDENT's staff	Items 1 to 9 (in part)
Mr DANDOY	A member of the PRESIDENT's staff	Items 1 to 9
Mr LINDER	A member of Mr ŠEFČOVIČ's staff	Items 9 (in part) and 10
Mr BRUNET	Chef de cabinet to Mr FÜLE	Items 9 (in part) and 10
Mr RADZIEJEWSKI	Chef de cabinet to Mr DOMINIK	Items 1 to 9
Ms CHOMICKA	A member of Mr DOMINIK's staff	Items 1 to 9
Ms CALVIÑO	Director-General, DG Budget	Items 1 to 9
Mr MORDUE	DG Enlargement	Items 9 (in part) and 10

Secretary: Ms DAY, Secretary-General, assisted by Mr AYET PUIGARNAU, Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2014) 2097/FINAL; SEC(2014) 459/2)

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

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(RCC(2014) 2097)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 8 September.

3. MINUTES OF 2096TH MEETING (3 SEPTEMBER)

(PV(2014) 2096)

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2096th meeting for the following week.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

4.1. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

- i) Commission Declaration on the Draft Decision of the Council and the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States of the European Union, meeting within the Council, authorising the opening of negotiations on an agreement between the European**

Union and its Member States and the Agency for Aerial Navigation Safety in Africa and Madagascar laying down the terms and conditions for the provision of Satellite-based Augmentations Service in Africa based on the European Satellite Navigation Programme EGNOS

(SI(2014) 322)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 322.

ii) Resumption of cooperation with Guinea-Bissau in the area of fisheries

(SI(2014) 326)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2014) 326.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS, THE EUROPEAN OMBUDSMAN AND NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

iii) Participation of Members of the Committee of the Regions in international conferences

(SR(2014) 21)

- The third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (Sendai, 14 to 18 March 2015)

The Commission agreed to the request to the PRESIDENT from Mr Michel Lebrun, President of the Committee of the Regions, concerning the attendance of a Member of the Committee of the Regions at the above-mentioned meeting as an observer in the EU delegation, with a reminder about the procedure to be followed.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2014) 460 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 1 and 5 September.

5.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2014) 461 ET SEQ)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 1 and 5 September.

5.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2014) 462 ET SEQ)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 1 and 5 September, as archived in e-Greffe.

5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2014) 463)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 8 and 12 September.

5.5. DELEGATION OF POWERS FOR THE ADOPTION OF MEASURES RELATED TO CERTAIN MATTERS PROVIDED FOR IN ARTICLE 9(1)(a) OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EEC) 2658/87 CONCERNING THE CLASSIFICATION OF GOODS IN THE COMBINED NOMENCLATURE

(C(2014) 6297)

The Commission decided to delegate to the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Taxation and Customs Union the power to adopt, on the Commission's behalf and under its responsibility, certain measures provided for in Article 9(1)(a) of Council Regulation (EEC) 2658/87 related to the classification of goods in the Combined Nomenclature, in accordance with the terms set out in C(2014) 6297.

**6. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EC) 726/2004 LAYING DOWN COMMUNITY PROCEDURES FOR THE AUTHORISATION AND SUPERVISION OF MEDICINAL PRODUCTS FOR HUMAN AND VETERINARY USE AND ESTABLISHING A EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY
(COM(2014) 557 AND /2; RCC(2014) 72)**

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2014) 557/2 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

**7. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON THE MANUFACTURE, PLACING ON THE MARKET AND USE OF MEDICATED FEED AND REPEALING COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 90/167/EEC
(COM(2014) 556 AND /2; SWD(2014) 271; SWD(2014) 272 AND /2; SEC(2014) 465; RCC(2014) 72)**

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2014) 556/2 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment and the summary thereof in staff working documents SWD(2014) 271 and SWD(2014) 272/2, the contents of which were noted.

It also took note of the opinion of the Impact Assessment Board on the above proposal for a Regulation, as set out in SEC(2014) 465.

8. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON VETERINARY MEDICINAL PRODUCTS (COM(2014) 558 AND /2; SWD(2014) 273; SWD(2014) 274; SEC(2014) 466; RCC(2014) 72)

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2014) 558/2 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment and the summary thereof in staff working documents SWD(2014) 273 and SWD(2014) 274, the contents of which were noted.

It also took note of the opinion of the Impact Assessment Board on the above proposal for a Regulation, as set out in SEC(2014) 466.

9. INTERIM REPORT ON THE BUDGET OF THE EUROPEAN UNION – SHORTFALL IN PAYMENT APPROPRIATIONS (SEC(2014) 478)

The PRESIDENT introduced the review of the interim report on the Union budget,

referring to his repeated warnings to the Council in February 2013 about the mismatch between commitment appropriations and payment appropriations when the agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 (MFF) was concluded. At the time, he had explicitly pointed out that the Commission would be able to manage the Union budget only if the maximum flexibility agreed by the Heads of State or Government were implemented.

His view was that the Commission was now facing a situation that highlighted in particular this need for budgetary flexibility. That was why the Commission had proposed draft amending budget No 3/2014, the mobilisation of the contingency margin for the 2014 financial year, and a draft budget for 2015 – on the assumption that full use would be made of the payment appropriations authorised by the MFF ceilings – all of these proposals having been submitted for adoption by the Council and Parliament in order to ensure the continued good management of the Union budget.

The PRESIDENT set out the difficulties already faced by the Commission this year in meeting all of its payment obligations, while regretting the unconstructive attitude of a number of Member States in the Council in relation to its budget proposals. Moreover, he took the view that it was for the present Commission to break the deadlock in order not to leave such a tricky problem for the Members of the incoming College.

Mr DOMINIK went into more detail about the causes and the consequences of the delicate budget situation referred to. He recapped the main points in his information note sent to the Members of the Commission before the meeting, which (i) summarised the current situation – unprecedented in the budgetary history of the Union – in which the Commission was facing a real shortage of payment appropriations, with the risk that it would not be possible to honour the Union's commitments, and (ii) proposed specific measures to rectify the situation.

Using a PowerPoint presentation, he explained that the current problem was partly

the result of the reduction in payment appropriations in comparison with the past laid down in the Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020, in particular for the 2014 and 2015 financial years. There was also the cumulative effect of the systematic carry-over from one financial year to another of an increasing volume of payments that had not been made because of recent decisions by the budgetary authority to reduce the general budget. All of this had snowballed, with the result that the outstanding commitments for the period 2007-2013 were € 222 billion at the closure of the 2013 financial year, of which € 26 billion was owed to the Member States.

He noted that the 2014 financial year, the first under the new MFF, which coincided with the launch of a significant number of initiatives intended to stimulate growth, was characterised by an increase in payment requests in the context of the economic crisis. The combination of these factors led to unusually high pressure on payment appropriations in the Union budget, as demonstrated by the level of execution of payments, which stood at 77% on 1 September this year, compared with 49% on 1 September 2007, the first year of the previous Multiannual Financial Framework.

While stressing the fact that the Commission was obliged to propose solutions which enabled the political priorities set out in the MFF 2014-2020 to be implemented, Mr DOMINIK recapped the measures which the Commission had already taken to avoid being unable to honour justified payment applications. He would therefore do his utmost to convince the budgetary authority to adopt in particular draft amending budget No 3/2014 as it stood, thereby allowing the additional own resources which the Union obtained from the fines imposed by the Commission in 2014 to be allocated to the financing of the payment appropriations requested (€ 4.7 billion), which they could easily cover, resulting in a virtually neutral financial impact for the Member States.

He also stressed the crucial importance of the interinstitutional negotiations on the 2015 draft budget, which provided for maximum mobilisation of available resources

within the limits of the ceilings laid down by the MFF 2014-2020. He called on the Members of the Commission to convey this message to their interlocutors in Parliament and the Council and felt that this mobilisation of resources would allow a better match between payment appropriations and the Union's commitments, while complying with the thresholds set in the MFF, and ensure sustainable budget management by stopping the accumulation of arrears.

With regard to the specific operational measures to alleviate payment difficulties that had been taken for some time in the Commission, Mr DOMINIK welcomed the good cooperation between the Directorate-General for Budget and the institution's other departments. Despite that, he acknowledged that some of those measures could be only of limited duration since the payments in question were subject to legal obligations.

He felt it was necessary to point out that the shortfall in payment appropriations was the result of decisions taken by the budgetary authority rather than of choices that could be attributed to the Commission. Citing Article 323 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which laid down that the three institutions – the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission – ‘shall ensure that the financial means are made available to allow the Union to fulfil its legal obligations in respect of third parties’, he called for a profound change in the budgetary authority's approach for the financial years ahead and suggested that the PRESIDENT should send a letter to the Presidents of the European Parliament and of the Council, under Article 324 TFEU, to bring to their attention the severe constraints on Europe's budgetary situation.

In the same way, Mr DOMINIK called for a change of attitude within the Commission in the short and medium term in order to ensure sustainable budget management, and recommended making use of all available flexibility in the Union's general budget in the coming financial years. He stressed the importance of a real collegiate approach in this context, with a more flexible interpretation of the

management of budget lines in the same thematic ‘families’ or under the same headings, and the need to authorise the Member of the Commission responsible for the Union budget to propose, as required, the reallocation of any available funds in order to use resources in the most efficient way possible. He considered that more attention should be paid, when making these trade-offs, to the impact of a given budgetary decision during financial year n on the budget management arrangements for $n+1$.

For the time being, Mr DOMINIK proposed continuing bilateral contacts between DG Budget and the other Commission departments in order to take into account the requirements, capacity and obligations specific to each of them. He asked ‘families’ of Directorates-General to continue to consult one another in order to identify their absolute priorities and the initiatives with the greatest added value.

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

- the spirit of unity, mobilisation and collegiality that had to drive the Commission and all its Members, who were collectively and individually concerned by the seriousness of the current budgetary situation, particularly the shortfall in payment appropriations, and had to meet past financial commitments under the 2007-13 Multiannual Financial Framework as well as the current commitments made by the Union in accordance with its major policy objectives, first and foremost growth and jobs; the political responsibility of the current College towards the next Commission, which would take office in a few weeks' time;
- the general support for the approach recommended by Mr DOMINIK and his call for collective mobilisation of the Commission in order to secure as a matter of urgency adoption by the budgetary authority of the draft amending budget No 3/2014 and the draft budget for 2015 under the best political conditions possible, and the need for Members of the Commission responsible for

departments belonging to the same thematic ‘families’ or headings to coordinate more closely and apply a common strategy for payment prioritisation rather than a piecemeal approach;

- the efforts already made by Members of the Commission; the mitigation measures taken and the instructions given to the departments under their authority for prioritising expenditure; the margins already used in some budget headings;
- the objectively large burden of the payment arrears due for previous financial years;
- the value of defining a common strategy for the Commission's action and communication, to draw the attention of the political players – the Council and the European Parliament – to the consequences of their decisions during negotiation of the Multiannual Financial Framework (2014-20); the need to send a clear and strong message to the budgetary authority on the current situation and the potential risks it entailed, particularly in terms of late payments, and hence the threat to the Union's credibility and reputation; the expediency of explaining in concrete terms the trade-offs and choices arising from the shortfall in payment appropriations, without hiding the political cost that would inevitably result;
- the suggestion that the Commission should bring this debate before the Council and that each Member of the Commission should put across this message in their political contacts with the government authorities in the Member States, to involve them in the resolution of the current financing problems, which their decisions had helped to create; the recommendation to urge national leaders to be realistic in their expectations regarding the Union;
- an emphasis on the fact that the appropriations sought by the Commission were intended solely to enable it to meet its obligations towards the Member States,

given that 94% of the European funds that it granted returned to the Member States and only 6% financed the running of the Institutions;

- the need to explain clearly the current budgetary impasse to the direct beneficiaries of the payments granted by the Commission, for example the regional and local authorities, small and medium-sized enterprises, non-governmental organisations, including individuals, and to mobilise them by warning them of the risks they could face in terms of financing their activities;
- a warning against the increase in the costs to the Commission that could ensue from the increase in legal proceedings brought by recipients of European payments in the event of delays in the payment of the expected amounts;
- over and above one-off solutions, the need for a wider reflection on the structural causes of the difficulties encountered by budget negotiations within the Union, on the means of striking a better balance between payments and commitments, on the annual nature of the budget and the particular arrangements for paying cohesion funds, particularly postponement or interruption of payments according to the state of implementation of programmes by the Member States, which translated into a structural liquidity problem; a suggestion that the question of prioritising commitment appropriations should perhaps be examined;
- the importance for the Commission, moreover, to analyse its own budgetary practices and draw objective conclusions from this analysis in order to improve internal functioning in the areas where this was necessary; the need to improve programming, transparency and information systems;
- in the field of the common agricultural policy (CAP), the budgetary difficulties caused by the EU compensation measures adopted last month for European producers of agricultural products affected by the Russian embargo; the possibility of using financial corrections or deploying the crisis reserve to meet

these unforeseen funding requirements;

- with regard to the external relations ‘family’, the need to take into account the significant efforts already made in managing heading 4 of the MFF, the more than proportional impact of the budgetary restrictions imposed within this heading (4.9% of total payment appropriations) and the innovative approaches explored for alleviating current and future budgetary bottlenecks; the importance of analysing these efforts with respect to the Union's commitments and credibility with regard to non-EU countries – not just those in situations of crisis, such as Ukraine, but also the partner countries, such as Tunisia, which had undertaken difficult structural reforms in the interests of closer approximation to Europe, and which Europe must continue to support.

Replying to these observations, Mr DOMINIK once again stressed that it was essential for the Commission to form a united front and send a robust political message to the budgetary authority without further delay. He returned to the idea of a letter from the PRESIDENT calling on the Council and Parliament to assume their responsibilities, in terms of both commitment appropriations and payment appropriations, to prevent the Commission from having to suffer the consequences of decisions it had not taken and which it had cautioned against in the strongest terms.

He added that within each of the Commission's thematic families/headings, the key criterion to be applied for prioritising expenditure must be that of accelerating growth in Europe.

With regard to the current negotiations on the third draft amending budget for 2014, at the same time as the draft budget 2015, he stressed that the allocations in question were already within the minimum limits and that in his view there was no room for compromise. He pointed out that the negotiation of the annual budget required a qualified majority and called on the Commission Members to use their powers of persuasion to obtain the Member States' votes in favour of the Commission's

proposals.

Lastly, he highlighted the fact that all the Member States benefited from EU budgetary expenditure, including net contributors to the budget, thanks to the significant value added of investments at European level.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr DOMINIK and the Members of the Commission for their contributions to the debate. He then summarised the conclusions to be drawn from the discussion and made a number of specific recommendations concerning follow-up. In general terms, he suggested adopting a common line with two strands, one practical and the other political.

On the practical front, he wished the present Commission to act collectively up to the last moment of its term of office. It was not acceptable to pass the problem on to the next Commission without taking the measures that would enable it to be resolved. Immediate action was therefore needed.

He also stressed the need to set priorities, while recognising the difficulties involved, in order to identify the sectors, policies and Member States for which payment obligations must be met without delay and those for which more leeway was possible.

On the specific question of funding for the EU compensation measures for producers affected by the Russian embargo, he was, in this context, in favour of deploying the crisis reserve.

While acknowledging that not all the MFF headings could be treated in the same way, he asked the Commission Members whose activities fell under the same budgetary headings to discuss and agree on prioritisation, ideally before the start of the institutional discussions on payments. He asked the Commissioners to submit to him and to Mr DOMINIK a common line to be adopted for each budgetary heading by the end of next week.

With regard to the political strand of the line to be adopted, he stressed the idea of trying to rally support for the Commission's proposals on the draft amending budget No 3/2014 and the draft budget 2015. He also pointed out that budgetary questions, in particular the matter of payment appropriations, would undoubtedly be discussed at the hearings of Commissioners-designate before the European Parliament. He said that it was also necessary for the Council to be made to face up to its responsibilities, in particular the Member States that were asking for a reduction in payment appropriations and calling for the MFF to be implemented in the spirit in which it had been negotiated, by making full use of the ceilings that had been set. Finally, he insisted that this was no time for wishful thinking about the mid-term review and the revision of the MFF, which were in any case tasks incumbent on the next Commission, and that the current budgetary problems had to be resolved before the end of the present mandate.

Winding up the discussion, the PRESIDENT said that he was prepared to discuss these matters with the EU Heads of State or Government who, on the one hand, were demanding measures to boost growth and competitiveness and, on the other, were often quick to call for reductions in financial allocations despite the fact that they had approved them. He confirmed that he would send a letter to the Council and Parliament highlighting the difficult situation of the Union's budget while stressing the importance of a good balance. He would aim to convince the budgetary authority but without dramatising the current situation, since that was not necessary.

The Commission took note of these conclusions and of Mr DOMINIK's information note in SEC(2014) 478.

10. RELATIONS WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

PREPARATION OF THE COMMUNICATION ON THE ENLARGEMENT STRATEGY AND MAIN CHALLENGES IN 2014-2015

Mr FÜLE informed the Commission Members of the progress in preparing the ‘2014-2015 enlargement package’ which would feature on the agenda of their meeting on 8 October. He explained that this set of documents would, as was customary, comprise a strategic analysis of the enlargement process in general and reports monitoring the progress achieved by each country that had embarked on the route to rapprochement with the Union. The aim of this exercise was to take stock of the overall situation regarding enlargement policy, the main objective of which had been, in the past five years, to enhance its credibility and the transformative power of the enlargement process in the Western Balkans and in Turkey.

In the past, enlargement had sometimes been regarded as a technical process of alignment with the Community *acquis*, whereas the current Commission had focused on the fundamentals. The Copenhagen criteria and the enlargement process had been given new impetus to enable candidate countries to address the challenges involved in enlargement, including overcoming a history of conflict. These measures had made it possible to strengthen the main policy vector of radical political and democratic transformation that constituted enlargement policy, and to turn this into a powerful external policy of the Union.

Mr FÜLE said that the rule of law and fundamental freedoms, competitiveness and good economic governance, and well-functioning public administrations were the three pillars of enlargement policy and preconditions for the successful integration of candidate countries into the Union. Two years previously, a new approach to the rule of law had been introduced. Last year the emphasis had been placed on the

importance of good economic governance, while this year special attention would be paid to reforming public administrations, which was vital to ensure good democratic governance, the supply of public services and the stimulation of growth and competitiveness. These three pillars underpinned the process of democratic transformation and promoted an environment in which good neighbourhood relations could be developed.

Mr FÜLE added that the general strategy document (i) would describe the new approach to economic governance and competitiveness, which would establish ways of improving cooperation with the candidate countries, giving special importance to structural reforms and the identification of investment needs, (ii) would underline the fact that the rule of law was and would remain at the heart of the enlargement process, stressing tangible results in terms of combating organised crime and corruption, and in relation to the reform of judicial systems and respect for fundamental rights, and (iii) would strengthen the instruments introduced under the new approach in Chapters 23 and 24 of the *acquis*, in particular the imbalance clause applicable in the negotiations with Montenegro and Serbia. This clause allowed the Union to freeze the negotiation of other chapters if there was a delay in implementing the reforms agreed in the chapters relating to the rule of law. Mr FÜLE explained that this clause could be invoked if Serbia failed to pursue the process of normalising relations with Kosovo, adding that the Stabilisation and Association Agreement recently initialled with Kosovo contained similar mechanisms.

The candidate countries would be regularly reminded of the importance of good neighbourhood relations. In this connection, he noted that regional cooperation had further increased in the past year, mainly due to the 'Western Balkans Six' initiative and increased cooperation in the context of the stabilisation and association process, and to regional initiatives in which Kosovo was becoming increasingly involved. The emphasis would be on the need to increase the connectivity of infrastructure in the region and between the region and the Union.

Mr FÜLE went on to describe briefly the state of play regarding the reports monitoring the progress achieved by each country.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 11.25.