



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

**PV(2016) 2166 final**

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

Strasbourg, 10 May 2016

# TEXTE EN

## MINUTES

**of the 2166<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Commission**

**held in Brussels**

**(Berlaymont)**

**on Wednesday 27 April 2016**

**(morning)**

—

**PV(2016) 2166 final**

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

**EN**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                                                                                                                                                                                |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <b>Attendance list</b>                                                                                                                                                         | <b>4-8</b> |
| 1. AGENDAS (OJ(2016) 2166/FINAL; SEC(2016) 188/FINAL) .....                                                                                                                    | 9          |
| 2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET (RCC(2016) 2166).....                                                                                                                    | 9          |
| 3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2164 <sup>TH</sup> AND 2165 <sup>TH</sup><br>COMMISSION MEETINGS (12 AND 20 APRIL) (PV(2016) 2164).....                                      | 9          |
| 4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2016) 51) .....                                                                                                                           | 9          |
| 4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS .....                                                                                                                                                 | 10         |
| 4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL .....                                                                                                                 | 10         |
| 4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT .....                                                                                                                                           | 11         |
| 5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION<br>OF POWERS.....                                                                                                            | 12         |
| 5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2016) 189 ET SEQ.).....                                                                                                                  | 12         |
| 5.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2016) 190 ET SEQ .) .....                                                                                                                                | 12         |
| 5.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2016) 191 ET SEQ.).....                                                                                                       | 12         |
| 5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2016) 192 AND /2) .....                                                                                                                 | 12         |
| 6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2016) 193<br>AND /2).....                                                                                                         | 13         |
| 6.1. PUBLICATIONS OFFICE – TERMINATION OF INTERNAL AND<br>INTERINSTITUTIONAL SELECTION PROCEDURE AND APPOINTMENT OF AN<br>AD15/16 DIRECTOR-GENERAL (PERS(2015) 87 TO /3) ..... | 13         |
| 6.2. DG INFORMATICS – DEPUTISING FOR THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF DG<br>INFORMATICS.....                                                                                            | 13         |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |    |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| 6.3. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – RENEWAL OF CONTRACTS OF CONTRACT STAFF RECRUITED UNDER THE TERMS OF ARTICLE 3A OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS TO THE COMMISSION REPRESENTATION IN CROATIA, PURSUANT TO COMMISSION DECISION C(2012) 4683 OF 17 AUGUST 2012 .....                                              | 14 |
| 7. OTHER BUSINESS.....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | 15 |
| 7.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT BY THE EU AND TURKEY .....                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 15 |
| 7.2. STATE OF PLAY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME FOR GREECE FOLLOWING THE SPRING MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (WASHINGTON, 15-17 APRIL 2016), AND THE INFORMAL MEETINGS OF THE EUROGROUP AND THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL (AMSTERDAM, 22 AND 23 APRIL 2016) ..... | 20 |
| 7.3. GLYPHOSATE (INFO(2016) 36) .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 20 |
| 7.4. INFORMATION POINT ON THE ZIKA VIRUS (INFO(2016) 33) .....                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 22 |
| 8. JOINT COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION AND THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – AN INTEGRATED EUROPEAN UNION POLICY FOR THE ARCTIC (JOIN(2016) 21 AND /2; RCC(2016) 52) .....                               | 23 |

**Single sitting: Wednesday 27 April 2016 (morning)**

The sitting opened at 10.13 with Mr JUNCKER, President, in the chair.

**Present:**

|                 |                                         |                         |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mr JUNCKER      | President                               |                         |
| Mr TIMMERMANS   | First Vice-President                    |                         |
| Ms MOGHERINI    | High Representative /<br>Vice-President |                         |
| Ms GEORGIEVA    | Vice-President                          |                         |
| Mr ANSIP        | Vice-President                          |                         |
| Mr ŠEFČOVIČ     | Vice-President                          |                         |
| Mr DOMBROVSKIS  | Vice-President                          |                         |
| Mr HAHN         | Member                                  | Items 7 (in part) and 8 |
| Ms MALMSTRÖM    | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr ARIAS CAÑETE | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr VELLA        | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr ANDRIUKAITIS | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms THYSSEN      | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr MOSCOVICI    | Member                                  | Items 1 to 8 (in part)  |
| Mr STYLIANIDES  | Member                                  | Items 1 to 8 (in part)  |
| Mr HOGAN        | Member                                  |                         |
| Lord HILL       | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms BULC         | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms BIENKOWSKA   | Member                                  |                         |
| Ms JOUROVÁ      | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr NAVRACSICS   | Member                                  |                         |
| Mr MOEDAS       | Member                                  |                         |

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr Paavo Lipponen, the former Finnish Prime Minister, also attended the meeting for the discussion on integrated Arctic policy (item 8 of these minutes).

Absent:

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Mr KATAINEN     | Vice-President |
| Mr OETTINGER    | Member         |
| Mr MIMICA       | Member         |
| Mr AVRAMOPOULOS | Member         |
| Ms CREȚU        | Member         |
| Ms VESTAGER     | Member         |

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

|                    |                                              |                         |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mr ROMAKKANIEMI    | Chef de cabinet to Mr KATAINEN               | Items 1 to 7 (in part)  |
| Ms LAUTSO-MOUSNIER | A member of Mr KATAINEN's staff              | Items 7 (in part) and 8 |
| Mr HAGER           | Chef de cabinet to Mr OETTINGER              |                         |
| Mr BEHRNDT         | Chef de cabinet to Mr MIMICA                 |                         |
| Ms SCHMITT         | Chef de cabinet to Mr AVRAMOPOULOS           | Items 1 to 7            |
| Ms ASTERIADI       | Deputy Chef de cabinet to<br>Mr AVRAMOPOULOS | Item 8                  |
| Mr DE MICHELIS     | Chef de cabinet to Ms CREȚU                  |                         |
| Ms JUUL-JØRGENSEN  | Chef de cabinet to Ms VESTAGER               |                         |

The following also sat in:

|                      |                                                                                |                        |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mr SELMAYR           | Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT                                               |                        |
| Mr ROMERO REQUENA    | Director-General, Legal Service                                                |                        |
| Mr PESONEN           | Director-General, DG Communication                                             |                        |
| Mr SCHINAS           | Head of the Spokesperson's Service and<br>Chief Spokesperson of the Commission |                        |
| Ms METTLER           | Head of the European Political Strategy<br>Centre                              |                        |
| Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA | Deputy Chef de cabinet to the<br>PRESIDENT                                     |                        |
| Mr SZOSTAK           | Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office                                              |                        |
| Ms DEJMEK-HACK       | Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office                                              | Item 8                 |
| Ms SILLAVEE          | PRESIDENT's Office                                                             |                        |
| Ms SUTTON            | Deputy Chef de cabinet to<br>Mr TIMMERMANS                                     | Items 1 to 7 (in part) |
| Mr WYNANDS           | Chef de cabinet to Mr DOMBROVSKIS                                              | Item 7 (in part)       |
| Mr KARNITSCHNIG      | Chef de cabinet to Mr HAHN                                                     | Items 1 to 7 (in part) |

(27 April 2016)

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

|              |                                                     |                        |
|--------------|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Mr VINČIŪNAS | Chef de cabinet to Mr ANDRIUKAITIS                  | Item 7 (in part)       |
| Mr BAILLY    | Chef de cabinet to Mr MOSCOVICI                     | Item 7 (in part)       |
| Ms MICHOU    | Deputy Secretary-General                            | Items 1 to 8 (in part) |
| Ms ANDREEVA  | Commission Spokesperson's Service                   |                        |
| Mr BUTI      | Director-General, Economic and Financial Affairs DG | Item 7 (in part)       |

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

**1. AGENDAS**

**(OJ(2016) 2166/FINAL; SEC(2016) 188/FINAL)**

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(2016) 2166)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 25 April.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2164<sup>TH</sup> AND 2165<sup>TH</sup> COMMISSION MEETINGS (12 AND 20 APRIL)**

**(PV(2016) 2164)**

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2164<sup>th</sup> meeting and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2165<sup>th</sup> meeting for the following week.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS**

**(RCC(2016) 51)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 22 April (RCC(2016) 51).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

#### **4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS**

##### **i) Trialogue**

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Official controls and other official activities performed to ensure the application of food and feed law, rules on animal health and welfare, plant health, plant reproductive material, plant protection products and any amendments to the different rules and guidelines (Regulation) – KADENBACH report – 2013/0140 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 153/2.

##### **ii) Council dossier**

(point 3.3 of the IRG record)

- Establishment of the Structural Reform Support Programme for the period 2017 to 2020 and amendment of Regulations (EU) 1303/2013 and (EU) 1305/2013 (Regulation) – 2015/0263(COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 160 and /2.

#### **4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL**

##### **iii) Programming of Council business**

(SI(2016) 164)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2016) 164 on the Council meetings between 28 April and 11 May.

##### **iv) Non-legislative dossier**

(point 4.1 of the IRG record)

- Authorisation for launch of negotiations on a Modernised Agreement with Mexico (recommendation for a Council Decision)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 158.

#### **4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT**

##### **v) Non-legislative dossier**

(point 5.1 of the IRG record)

- Discharge in respect of the implementation of the general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2014 (53 reports) — DLABAJOVÁ, SCHMIDT, PIEPER, CZARNECKI, VISTISEN, MACOVEI, VAUGHAN and MARINESCU reports

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2016) 267.

##### **vi) Action taken on non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its February II part-session**

(point 5.6.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved documents SP(2016) 269 and /2 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its February II part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

##### **vii) Action taken on opinions and resolutions adopted by Parliament at its March part-session**

(point 5.6.3 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SP(2016) 270 on the action taken on the opinions and resolutions adopted by Parliament at its March part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

## **5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS**

### **5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED**

**(SEC(2016) 189 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 18 and 22 April.

### **5.2. EMPOWERMENT**

**(SEC(2016) 190 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 18 and 22 April.

### **5.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS**

**(SEC(2016) 191 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 18 and 22 April, as archived in Decide.

### **5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES**

**(SEC(2016) 192 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 25 and 29 April and of the finalisation written procedures initiated following the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet on 25 April.

## **6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS**

**(SEC(2016) 193 AND /2)**

### **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

**(PERS(2016) 38 AND /2)**

#### **6.1. PUBLICATIONS OFFICE – TERMINATION OF INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL SELECTION PROCEDURE AND APPOINTMENT OF AN AD15/16 DIRECTOR-GENERAL (PERS(2015) 87 TO /3)**

The Commission took note of the favourable opinion of the Management Committee of the Publications Office of the European Union, adopted unanimously on 26 April, and, on a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and having consulted Mr NAVRACSICS and also Mr ANSIP, Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr KATAINEN, decided:

- to terminate, with immediate effect, internal and interinstitutional selection procedure COM/2015/1435 for the post of Director-General of the Publications Office of the European Union, without making an appointment;
- to fill that post by transferring in the interest of the service under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Rudolf STROHMEIER, an AD16 official and currently Deputy Director-General responsible for research programmes in DG Research and Innovation.

Unless indicated otherwise, these decisions would take effect on 1 May 2016.

#### **6.2. DG INFORMATICS – DEPUTISING FOR THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF DG INFORMATICS**

Under Article 27 of its Rules of Procedure, the Commission, on a proposal

from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and having consulted Mr OETTINGER and also Mr ANSIP and Mr KATAINEN, decided to designate the following officials, in the order set out below, to deputise for the Director-General of DG Informatics if he should be prevented from performing his duties:

- Mr Bernard MAGENHANN, Director, ‘Resources Management and Optimisation’ (DIGIT.R);
- Mr Kenneth DUCATEL, Director, ‘Information Security’ (DIGIT.S);
- Mr Philippe VAN DAMME, Director, ‘Infrastructure Solutions’ (DIGIT.C).

This decision would take effect immediately.

**6.3. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – RENEWAL OF CONTRACTS OF CONTRACT STAFF RECRUITED UNDER THE TERMS OF ARTICLE 3A OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS TO THE COMMISSION REPRESENTATION IN CROATIA, PURSUANT TO COMMISSION DECISION C(2012) 4683 OF 17 AUGUST 2012**

The Commission took note of the information in point 2 of PERS(2016) 38 and, on a proposal from Ms GEORGIEVA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided to suspend, until the entry into force of the new general provisions for implementing Article 79(2) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union, governing the conditions of employment of contract staff employed by the Commission under the terms of Articles 3a and 3b of the said Conditions, the condition set forth in Article 2 of Commission Decision C(2012) 4683 of 17 August 2012, thus allowing the contracts of contract staff recruited pursuant to this Decision to the Commission Representation in Croatia to be renewed without undergoing the selection procedure referred to above.

This decision would take effect immediately.

## **7. OTHER BUSINESS**

### **7.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE JOINT STATEMENT BY THE EU AND TURKEY**

The PRESIDENT invited Mr TIMMERMANS to brief Members on the state of play regarding the implementation of the joint statement on the management of migration flows, signed by the European Union and Turkey on 18 March, and on his visit to Turkey on 23 April in the company of the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, and the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk.

Mr TIMMERMANS began by saying that during his visit he had participated – on behalf of the Commission and the PRESIDENT – In the launch of projects financed by the facility for refugees in Turkey.

He went on to describe the points of the EU-Turkey agreement discussed in the high-level meetings. His briefing focused on the political aspect of the agreement that was the most complex at this stage: namely, the preparation of a decision that the EU might potentially propose in June for the liberalisation of its visa system for Turkish citizens, on condition that the Turkish authorities fulfilled all the prerequisites, known as the 'benchmarks', before any decision was taken by the European Parliament and the Council. He explained that the Turkish authorities were working on this but acknowledged the difficulties encountered.

Mr TIMMERMANS reiterated the political desire for Turkey to forge a closer relationship with the EU and said that it was essential for the Member States to engage actively with the country. During his visit, he had strongly

emphasised the fact that the EU could consider accelerating the process, though without compromising on the essence of the agreement – namely the fulfilment of the benchmarks – to allow the EU to draw its own conclusions and, potentially, propose visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens. Although the outcome of the work and the ongoing talks was unknown, he emphasised how important the success of the EU-Turkey agreement was for the future, in terms of migration policy and the stability of the entire region.

Ms MOGHERINI confirmed that Turkey was making considerable efforts, but that there was indeed no room for negotiation on the fulfilment of the benchmarks that were a prerequisite for any proposed visa liberalisation, in order to safeguard the credibility of the Union and the consistency of its policy line. She also felt it important to open Chapters 23 (Judiciary and fundamental rights) and 24 (Justice, freedom and security) of the accession negotiation process with Turkey, while stressing the need to explain to the people of Europe the rationale behind the project the EU was working on with Turkey.

Returning to the concept of consistency, she cited the Commission's proposal, independently of the situation with Turkey, to press ahead with visa liberalisation for Kosovo<sup>1</sup>, noting that country's positive attitude towards forging a closer relationship with the EU. Like the PRESIDENT, she would be meeting with the Kosovar Prime Minister on his visit to Brussels that day.

The PRESIDENT, in turn, spoke of the importance of explaining to Europe's citizens the preconditions for visa liberalisation laid down in the EU-Turkey statement of 18 March on managing migration. He stressed that the

---

<sup>1</sup> This designation was without prejudice to positions on status, and was in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244/1999 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

benchmarks and timetable had been clearly announced, spelled out and approved by both the Member States and Turkey.

Mr MOSCOVICI reported on the success and impact of the high-level economic dialogue in Turkey the previous week, in which he had participated with Mr KATAINEN, Mr VELLA and Mr HAHN. The impression he had received from his meetings in the country was that Turkey's priorities for the agreement with the European Union were, indeed, the liberalisation of the visa system, the issue of the negotiation of the customs union, which depended, however, on a settlement of the Cyprus question, and Turkey's role in the Union's trade relations. He also spoke of the internal political tensions in Turkey and the country's extreme sensitivity to European criticism of failure to respect the freedom of the press and the independence of the judiciary.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following key points:

- the political complexity of any future decision the European Parliament and the Council might take on the liberalisation of the visa system for Turkish citizens;
- on the one hand, the European Union's interest in supporting Turkey and promoting its rapprochement with Europe; on the other, a call not to give in to any form of pressure, for the sake of the EU's credibility, and the need strongly to urge Turkey to respect the benchmarks that were a condition for the decision on visa liberalisation;
- questions, however, about whether Turkey would be able to meet all of those conditions by the deadline at the end of June;
- the need to explain to European public opinion the political stakes for the

EU of the agreement with Turkey on managing and receiving refugees, and the implications for the entire region;

- a reference to the positive impact that visa liberalisation could have on the internal situation of a non-member country, as had been the case with Ukraine;
- nevertheless, a reiteration of the non-negotiable nature of respect for the European values of the framework for the pre-accession negotiations; the role the Commission could play in supporting the pro-European camp in Turkey;
- a call for information to be communicated about the projects funded by the facility for refugees in Turkey;
- a reference to the signs of progress in the negotiations on resolving the question of Cyprus;
- approval of the proposal to grant visa liberalisation to Kosovo for its nationals travelling to the European Union.

The PRESIDENT reminded the meeting that the European Council had approved an agreement with Turkey on 18 March allowing for the possibility of lifting the visa requirements at the latest by the end of June 2016 if Turkey met the benchmarks. For the sake of the EU's internal and external credibility he repeated that there could be no compromising on the conditions agreed. However, he said that if Turkey did adopt legislation and take steps to meet the benchmarks the fact remained that Europe's citizens still had the impression that it was always Europe making concessions to Turkey. Finally, his reply to those who criticised the agreement between the European Union and Turkey on managing migration was to ask them to imagine what the situation would be like today if the agreement did not exist, knowing that the

Union would be the first to be blamed for a culpable failure to act.

For all of these reasons, the PRESIDENT supported a robust and proactive communication strategy on the part of the European Union, coupled with effective information addressed to the European public to explain its policy and its choices. As part of this strategy he wanted the Union to reassert European values, to stress, in particular, the freedom of the press in Turkey, and clearly to state that if the benchmarks were not met there would be no visa liberalisation. As for the timetable, he said that the third report on the progress made by Turkey towards meeting the benchmarks in the visa liberalisation roadmap would be submitted to the College at its next meeting on 4 May, accompanied, if appropriate, by a legislative proposal to be put to Parliament and the Council for adoption and to national parliaments for consultation. This report and any proposal would form a coherent whole with the first package of reforms of the common European asylum system and a proposal on managing the Union's external borders.

Mr TIMMERMANS took the floor again briefly to confirm what the PRESIDENT had said and call for a distinction to be made between matters arising from the agreement on managing refugees and the question of respect for fundamental freedoms, which was essential for the pre-accession negotiations. He also pointed out that the possibility of visa liberalisation was not a new idea; the roadmap for achieving it had simply been brought forward by three months. If the visa requirement was abolished it would apply to Turkish nationals with biometric passports, which were more secure than traditional passports. On another level, he warned against underestimating the anger among Turkish communities in certain EU Member States, which risked being fomented by certain Turkish political movements.

In conclusion, he suggested that the European Union should stick strictly to the benchmarks that had been laid down and ensure that Member States did

not try to impose additional conditions on Turkey, for short-term considerations, as some apparently wanted to do. He stressed the vital importance of the agreement on migration operating properly to avoid a repeat of the mass influx of migrants and the tragedies in the Mediterranean.

The Commission took note of this information and these conclusions.

**7.2. STATE OF PLAY OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME FOR GREECE FOLLOWING THE SPRING MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (WASHINGTON, 15-17 APRIL 2016), AND THE INFORMAL MEETINGS OF THE EUROGROUP AND THE ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL (AMSTERDAM, 22 AND 23 APRIL 2016)**

Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Mr MOSCOVICI provided an update on the discussions held in Washington from 13 to 17 April in conjunction with the meetings of the G20 Finance Ministers and the International Monetary Fund, and those held during the informal meetings of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council and the Eurogroup on 22 and 23 April in Amsterdam with a view to finalising the first evaluation of the assistance programme for Greece under the European Stability Mechanism.

The Commission took note of this information.

**7.3. GLYPHOSATE  
(INFO(2016) 36)**

Mr ANDRIUKAITIS reminded the Members of the Commission that he had drawn their attention at the meetings of 2 and 9 March to the question of renewing authorisation for glyphosate, a common herbicide used in the EU without interruption since 1975. The Commission had to decide before the end of June whether to renew this authorisation based on an assessment by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). If this assessment was favourable

he observed that the matter would nevertheless cause a stir in public opinion and the European media. This was the background against which he had raised the question of renewing authorisation for glyphosate with the College several weeks previously, aware that the Commission was in the awkward position of having to take sole responsibility for a decision on which the Member States were divided.

The situation was very different now for two main reasons. Firstly, two weeks earlier the European Parliament had adopted a resolution calling for the authorisation of glyphosate to be renewed, albeit for a shorter period of seven years rather than the 15 years proposed, thus sending a clear message that the EU must take account of scientific opinion in its decision-making. Secondly, he was now confident of the support of the Member States, since a majority of them, representing more than 70% of the population of the Union, were in favour of renewing authorisation for a period of ten years.

He proposed to conduct the forthcoming discussions on that basis, with a margin for negotiation on the duration of the renewal, which could be between seven and ten years.

A brief discussion followed, in the course of which the Commission raised in particular its support for the proposed approach, the need to ensure that a reasonable renewal period was maintained in order to provide a reliable basis for the economic sectors that used glyphosate to plan ahead, a question on the possibility of making any authorisation subject to review should new scientific findings emerge, the need to base product-authorisation decisions on a scientific assessment while preserving in certain cases some scope for adopting political decisions, and the suggestion that a scientific opinion be sought on the methodology used by EFSA compared with other equivalent international institutions.

Mr ANDRIUKAITIS replied to these comments by pointing out that the

Commission could decide to submit an authorisation for review and pointed out that the methodology used by EFSA was governed by the legislation in force.

The PRESIDENT thanked Mr ANDRIUKAITIS for his presentation, noted the Commission's Members' support for his proposed approach and took the opportunity presented by this case to express his wish to devote part of the Commission seminar on 30 and 31 August to a general discussion on the committee procedure, and particularly delegated acts.

The Commission took note of this information and of the note in INFO(2016) 36, circulated under the authority of Mr ANDRIUKAITIS.

#### **7.4. INFORMATION POINT ON THE ZIKA VIRUS (INFO(2016) 33)**

Mr ANDRIUKAITIS informed Members of the measures taken by the EU to respond to the appearance in Europe of illnesses caused by the Zika virus. He reminded the meeting that the epidemic had first appeared in Latin America and the Caribbean, and that the situation was very serious, as the virus - long considered to be harmless - had been responsible, since 2014, for a very large number of births of babies with microcephalus, and there was not as yet any vaccine or effective treatment. Although the virus was not yet established in Europe, he noted that no fewer than 410 imported cases had already been reported.

He explained that at this stage he was following the development of the virus in the EU closely, together with the Commission's departments, including the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), in close cooperation with the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Common guidelines had been drawn up for travellers and health professionals and the Commission was supporting measures by Member States to eliminate

mosquitoes on board ships and aircraft, to provide information on the virus and to detect it in blood donors.

He also mentioned the close cooperation with the other Members of the Commission concerned, and in particular Mr MOEDAS, who had mobilised EUR 10 million for research into the virus, Mr NAVRACSICS, with regard to the use of the Joint Research Centre, and Mr MIMICA on all aspects related to development cooperation.

Although the situation was currently under control, Mr ANDRIUKAITIS said that it might be necessary to take emergency action to minimise the risk of transmission of the virus in Europe.

The Commission took note of this information and of the note in INFO(2016) 33, circulated under the authority of Mr ANDRIUKAITIS, Mr MIMICA, Mr MOEDAS, Mr STYLIANIDES and Mr NAVRACSICS.

**8. JOINT COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION AND THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – AN INTEGRATED EUROPEAN UNION POLICY FOR THE ARCTIC**  
**(JOIN(2016) 21 AND /2; RCC(2016) 52)**

The PRESIDENT welcomed Paavo Lipponen, former Prime Minister of Finland, and thanked him for taking part in the presentation to the Commissioners of his strategic vision for the Arctic. He recalled that they had both started exploring the issue in 1997, when the ‘Northern Dimension’ policy had been launched. At his request, Mr Lipponen had drawn up a report that had been used to prepare the Joint Communication on an integrated European Union policy for the Arctic that the Commission was adopting that day.

Mr Lipponen thanked the Commissioners for the honour of attending their meeting. He congratulated Ms MOGHERINI, Mr VELLA, Mr MOEDAS and the Commissioners involved in the Communication on the quality of the proposed strategy for the Arctic, which should enable the Union to play a leading role in the region.

He pointed out that the work undertaken since 1997 had led to the development of the Northern Dimension policy – one of the most successful EU external relations policies – which had also enjoyed the unanimous support of the Member States.

He then listed the priorities that, in his view, should be included in the EU policy for the Arctic, namely (i) combating climate change and reducing carbon emissions, (ii) the economic development of the region and sustainable use of its natural resources, (iii) opening up new routes to and from Asia, in particular, and (iv) improving the living conditions of the local populations, while respecting their rights and traditions. He noted that Finland would chair the Arctic Council the following year and would therefore be called upon to play a key role, which would enable it to promote the EU's strategy. The Arctic would also be one of the main issues addressed during celebrations for the centenary of Finland's independence the following year.

Lastly, he referred to his long career in public life, and singled out his involvement in signing the agreement on Finland's accession to the European Union in 1993. He was therefore moved to be meeting a Commission comprised of 28 Members, and felt that it neatly rounded off one aspect of his political life and commitment to Europe. He concluded by proclaiming 'Long Live Europe!', to applause from the Commissioners.

Ms MOGHERINI thanked Mr Lipponen for his outstanding contribution to the work that had been done on formulating an integrated EU policy for the Arctic. She remarked that two Commissioners from southern Europe would put forward the EU's Arctic strategy, thus reflecting its truly European nature.

She mentioned the importance of the Arctic, firstly with regard to the implications of climate change for regional and global warming, hence the need to put it centre stage when implementing the agreement that had been reached in Paris at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Climate Change (COP21) in December 2015. The Arctic was also important strategically and in terms of various aspects of the EU's common foreign and security policy, since it was a region at the crossroads of three continents that concerned no fewer than eight countries, three of which were EU Member States.

She stressed the need to share the region's potential for new communication routes and new energy sources between the countries established there, but stated that the risks inherent in its development needed to be addressed through coordinated international action, without forgetting the work to be done with the local populations.

Ms MOGHERINI pointed out that no fewer than 39 measures had been identified under the three main headings of the Union's strategy, namely (i) combating climate change, (ii) sustainable development and (iii) international cooperation. The scope of the latter could usefully be expanded in the coming years. She recalled that the Finnish Presidency of the Arctic Council the following year would enable the Union to enhance its role in the region and boost implementation of the strategy set out in the Joint Communication.

Lastly, she mentioned the security aspects, which meant that the Arctic was an asset, but also posed a risk, given the long-standing military presence in the region. Greater international cooperation on a wide range of issues was therefore necessary.

Mr VELLA explained that the development of the Arctic region was affected by external factors such as greenhouse gas emissions, transport and tourism. He also noted that the EU was a key market for imports of products from the Arctic region. In addition, the Arctic was of strategic importance for the development of clean energy, new technologies suited to cold climates and fish farming.

Nevertheless, the majority of the disruption faced by the Arctic was related to global warming and environmental degradation. For this reason, the fight against climate change and protection of the environment, whether on the ground or in the Arctic ocean, played a prominent role in the Communication.

In this context, Mr VELLA emphasised the urgency of taking action in the Arctic, where global warming was advancing twice as fast as in the rest of the world, especially as carbon dioxide emissions from the melting of the permafrost were accelerating the process. The rising sea levels and changes to weather conditions that would ensue would weigh heavily on marine ecosystems and wildlife.

In addition, the Arctic was home to four million people whose traditional knowledge should serve as the basis for the EU's policy aimed at better coordination of resources, financing programmes and investment priorities, in order to promote a modern economic model centred on environmental protection, sustainable development and international cooperation. This objective could be achieved by developing sustainable energy practices, Blue Growth and better transport connections and by moving towards a circular economy. Mr VELLA stressed the importance of better understanding the processes under way and their repercussions, in particular through research and scientific cooperation.

Mr MOEDAS pointed out that the proposed strategy for the Arctic offered the EU an opportunity to become a role model in the field of 'diplomatic science', in so far as it made it possible to take action on its three main components of (i) science for diplomacy, (ii) science in diplomacy, and (iii) diplomacy for science.

He clarified that science for diplomacy consisted of building bridges, and the Arctic was a perfect example of this, since the scientific dialogue preceded the political dialogue there. Science in diplomacy made it possible to respond to the great challenges facing the planet, in particular by means of technical solutions. Diplomacy for science covered globalisation and the different ways of taking advantage of the opportunities it offered without wasting existing resources.

He concluded that by pursuing these three lines of action, the EU could implement its strategy and show the way in the scientific field.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- the need to organise a conference involving all interested parties likely to contribute to implementing the EU's integrated Arctic policy;
- consideration of the environmental and security risks posed by the expansion of maritime traffic in the Arctic and the geopolitical risks that could be created by the opening of the north-east route crossing Russian territorial waters;
- more generally, the need to develop closer and fuller cooperation with Russia with regard to the Arctic, in order to cover all aspects of its development, including security;
- questions as to the sources of financing which would make it possible to raise the estimated 140 million euros needed for development of the Arctic;
- the importance of the Arctic in the area of scientific research devoted to preserving the planet's seeds and to biotechnology;
- the need to develop decarbonisation technologies within the framework of the EU's Arctic strategy;
- the priority to be given to protection of the Arctic environment, in a region of fragile environmental equilibria that was particularly vulnerable to pollution risks.

Mr Lipponen thanked the Members of the College for the Union's ambitions for the region, as demonstrated by their support for the proposed integrated Arctic policy. The next step would be to implement tangible projects aimed at addressing the environmental challenges facing the Arctic. He added that the investment needed for

development in the region had already been mobilised and amounted to one billion euros per month.

To conclude, he mentioned the strategic potential and importance of northern regions for the EU, in particular with regard to the extraction of rare earths. The Arctic Council would in the near future be asked to take a series of decisions to ensure the security of transport in the region and thereby to strengthen international cooperation.

The PRESIDENT concluded by warmly thanking Mr Lipponen for his visit, for the contribution that he had made to the integrated Arctic policy presented that day and, on a more personal level, for his friendship.

The Commission approved the Joint Communication in JOIN(2016) 21/2, for transmission to the European Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

\*

\* \*

The Commission's other discussions on certain agenda items are recorded in the special minutes.

\*

\* \*

The meeting closed at 12.05.