



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2016) 2193 final

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

Brussels, 10 January 2017

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2193rd meeting of the Commission

held in Strasbourg

(Winston Churchill building)

on Tuesday 13 December 2016

(afternoon)

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PV(2016) 2193 final

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

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Single sitting: Tuesday 13 December 2016 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.07 with Mr JUNCKER, President, in the chair. Item 14 was chaired by Mr KATAINEN.

Present:

Mr JUNCKER	President	Items 1 to 13
Ms MOGHERINI	High Representative / Vice-President	Items 1 to 13
Mr ANSIP	Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	Items 1 to 9/10/11/12/13 (in part)
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Vice-President	
Mr KATAINEN	Vice-President	
Mr OETTINGER	Member	Items 1 to 13
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member	Items 1 to 13
Mr MIMICA	Member	
Mr ARIAS CAÑETE	Member	Items 1 to 13
Mr ANDRIUKAITIS	Member	
Mr AVRAMOPOULOS	Member	
Ms THYSSEN	Member	
Mr MOSCOVICI	Member	
Mr STYLIANIDES	Member	
Mr HOGAN	Member	Items 1 to 13
Ms BULC	Member	
Ms BIEŃKOWSKA	Member	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Member	
Mr NAVRACSICS	Member	
Ms CREȚU	Member	
Ms VESTAGER	Member	
Mr MOEDAS	Member	
Sir Julian KING	Member	

Absent:

Mr TIMMERMANS

First Vice-President

Ms GEORGIEVA

Vice-President

Mr HAHN

Member

Mr VELLA

Member

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

Ms SUTTON	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS
Ms GROS-TCHORBADJIYSKA	A member of Ms GEORGIEVA's staff
Mr MÜLLER	A member of Mr HAHN's staff
Mr NEALE	Expert in Mr VELLA's cabinet

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 Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Mr SWIEBODA	European Political Strategy Centre	
Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	Items 1 to 13
Mr THOLONIAT	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Ms DEJMEK-HACK	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 9 to 14
Ms SILLAVEE	PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr WYNANDS	Chef de cabinet to Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Items 1 to 8
Ms CHIRICO	A member of Mr KATAINEN's staff	Items 9 to 14
Mr HERMANS	Chef de cabinet to Ms THYSEN	Items 1 to 8
Mr HUSAK	Chef de cabinet to Ms BIENKOWSKA	Items 9 to 14
Ms ANDREEVA	Commission Spokesperson's Service	Items 1 to 13

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2016) 2193/FINAL/2; SEC(2016) 521/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) 2193)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 12 December.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2191ST AND 2192ND MEETING OF THE COMMISSION (30 NOVEMBER AND 7 DECEMBER)

(PV(2016) 2191)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2191st meeting and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2192nd meeting for the following week.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2016) 155)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held on Friday 9 December (RCC(2016) 155).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. HORIZONTAL ITEMS

- i) Follow-up to the Ombudsman's strategic inquiry concerning the transparency of trilogues**
(SPI(2016) 51)

The Commission approved the approach set out in SPI(2016) 51.

- ii) Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making – Draft Joint Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities for 2017**
(SPI(2016) 43 and /2)

The Commission took note of SPI(2016) 43 and /2, the text of the joint declaration and the working document annexed thereto.

4.2. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

- iii) Trilogues**
(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Use of the 470-790 MHz frequency band in the Union (Decision) – TOIA report – 2016/0027 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 465.

- Amendment of Regulation (EU) 531/2012 as regards rules for wholesale roaming markets (Regulation) – KUMPULA-NATRI report – 2016/0185 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 511.

- Recognition of professional qualifications in inland navigation and repeal of Council Directive 96/50/EC and Council Directive 91/672/EEC (Directive) – MEISSNER report – 2016/0050 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 504.

- Amendment of Regulation (EC) 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of visas when crossing the external borders and those whose nationals are exempt from that requirement (Regulation) – DÍAZ DE MERA GARCÍA CONSUEGRA report – 2016/0142 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 513.

- Establishment of a Union framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy (Regulation – recast) – AFFRONTE report – 2015/0133 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 514.

- Amendment of Regulation (EU) 19/2013 implementing the bilateral safeguard clause and the stabilisation mechanism for bananas of the Trade Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and Colombia and Peru, of the other part, and amendment of Regulation (EU) 20/2013 implementing the bilateral safeguard clause and the stabilisation mechanism for bananas of the Agreement establishing an Association between the European Union and its Member States, on the one hand, and Central America on the other (Regulation) – DE SARNEZ report – 2015/0112 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 519.

iv) European Parliament dossier – December part-session

(point 3.2 of the IRG record)

Non-legislative procedure

- Amendment of Decision 2008/376/EC on the adoption of the Research Programme of the Research Fund for Coal and Steel and on the multiannual technical guidelines for this programme (Council Decision)
- BUZEK report – 2016/0047 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2016) 812.

v) Council dossier

(point 3.3 of the IRG record)

- Amendment of Directive 2013/34/EU as regards disclosure of income tax information by certain undertakings and branches ('Country by country reporting') (Directive) – REGNER report – 2016/0107 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2016) 509.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

vi) Programming of Council business

(SI(2016) 512)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2016) 512 on the Council meetings between 15 and 21 December.

4.4. RELATIONS WITH NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS, THE OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

vii) Follow-up to Committee of the Regions opinions – June plenary session

(point 6.4.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SR(2016) 26/2 on the action taken by the Commission on the opinions adopted by the Committee of the Regions at its session of June, for transmission to the Committee of the Regions.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2016) 522 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 5 and 9 December.

5.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2016) 523 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 5 and 9 December.

5.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2016) 524 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 5 and 9 December, as archived in Decide.

5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2016) 525 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 12 and 16 December and of the finalisation written procedure initiated following the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet on Monday 12 December.

6. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION – EU LAW – BETTER RESULTS THROUGH BETTER APPLICATION

(C(2016) 8600 AND /2; RCC(2016) 164)

7. INTERNAL GUIDELINES – FOLLOW-UP TO THE COMMUNICATION – BETTER RESULTS THROUGH BETTER APPLICATION

(C(2016) 8428 TO /3; RCC(2016) 164)

The Commission:

- adopted in principle the communication in document C(2016) 8600/2;
- empowered, under Article 13 of its Rules of Procedures, Mr TIMMERMANS, Member of the Commission in charge of Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, to adopt formally the communication, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, in all the official languages of the Union as soon as the texts became available, for notification to the Member States;
- decided to transfer for information to Parliament, the Council, the Court of Justice of the European Union, the European Central Bank, the European Court of Auditors, the European Economic and Social Committee,

the Committee of the Regions, the European Investment Bank, the European Ombudsman, the European Data Protection Supervisor and the national parliaments;

- to publish it in the Official Journal of the European Union;
- to adopt the guidelines set out in C(2016) 8428/3.

8. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EC) 883/2004 ON THE COORDINATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEMS AND REGULATION (EC) 987/2009 LAYING DOWN THE PROCEDURE FOR IMPLEMENTING REGULATION (EC) NO 883/2004 (COM(2016) 815 TO /3; SWD(2016) 460; SWD(2016) 461; SEC(2016) 539; RCC(2016) 158)

Mr DOMBROVSKIS presented the proposal for a regulation on the coordination of social security systems and its implementing rules, which were being tabled for approval by the College that day. He began by noting that this initiative had been announced in the 2016 Commission work programme and had already been the subject of a policy debate on 12 October.

He added that on the basis of in-depth analyses and extensive consultations with the Member States, this debate had confirmed the broad support of the Commission for the points of the current legislation that needed updating, one of which was the coordination of social security systems, which needed to be improved. The areas concerned were long-term care benefits, unemployment benefits, family benefits and the coordination of social security systems for posted workers. He added that the proposal also provided clarification on access to social security benefits for economically inactive persons.

The European rules on coordination of social security guaranteed that citizens

maintained their social cover when they moved to another Member State. The rules had been in place since 1959 and were regularly adapted to their intended use, and to the EU's social and economic realities.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS insisted on the fact that these European rules were designed to coordinate systems, not harmonise them. In other words, the objective of the proposal for a regulation was not to examine membership criteria and entitlement to benefits as defined by each Member State. Similarly, the aim was not to introduce a minimum level of protection or compel Member States to introduce new benefits under their national systems. He stressed that the Member States retained their exclusive competence to organise their social security schemes and that it was up to the legislation in each country to set the eligibility conditions for the benefits provided by the scheme.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS considered that the proposal for a regulation presented that day was not only necessary but balanced and timely, in the sense that it facilitated the free circulation of workers and protected their rights, while strengthening the tools available to the national authorities to fight the risk of abuse or fraud. It established a closer link between the place where contributions were paid and the place where benefits were claimed, thereby ensuring a fair distribution of the financial burden between Member States.

However, he did not underestimate the political sensitivity of these issues in some Member States, which was why the national competences for designing social security schemes – within the limits of EU law – were emphasised in the current version of the text.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS concluded by observing that, in view of the diverse situations in the Member States' social security schemes, the Commission, with this proposal, remained impartial, fulfilled its role of guardian of the treaties and defended the freedoms of the internal market.

Ms THYSSEN pointed out that freedom of movement was a fundamental EU right highly valued by European citizens. She added that workers' mobility could help the EU's economic growth and competitiveness recover, where it was based on clear and fair rules, compliance with which could be verified. The proposal for a regulation she was tabling that day therefore intended to preserve freedom of movement and protect citizens' rights, while strengthening the necessary tools to fight against any potential abuse.

She considered that the proposal was in line with the spirit of unity advocated by the Declaration of the 27 in Bratislava. Firstly, it took into account the sensitivities of all the Member States. Secondly, it concerned citizens who opted for mobility but also those who did not and might consider their national social security system to be too open to insured persons who did not pay in to it to remain viable in the long term. Thirdly, it provided better prospects for young people who, if unemployed, would find it easier to go and seek employment in another Member State, and for senior citizens who could retire in another Member State without losing the long-term care benefits for which they had paid contributions in their country of origin.

She recognised that not all the points of the proposal would satisfy all the Member States and she was aware of the risk that populists could exploit certain aspects to show that the Commission did not listen to citizens. She therefore recommended that the proposal be considered as a whole, containing rules concerning persons who were not economically active, the aggregation and export of unemployment benefits, family benefits and parental leave benefits, and the improvement of the implementation of these rules.

She also pointed out that the proposal did not amend the present rules on the export of family benefits, since it made no provision for indexing these benefits. In other words, the Member State in which the parent(s) worked was still responsible for paying the family benefits and this amount could not be modified if the child was

resident in another Member State.

Ms THYSEN felt that, just as the motto of the Commission's proposal on posted workers was 'equal pay for equal work', the motto for the proposal being tabled that day should be 'equal benefits for equal contributions'.

In conclusion, she reaffirmed her conviction that this proposal would make it possible to deepen the internal market and facilitate the freedoms of movement, including free movement of persons, despite the difficult political climate. However, she stressed that care must be taken in communicating the measures adopted that day so as to take into account the sensitivities that might be aroused.

In the course of the ensuing debate, the Commission raised the following main points:

- full support for the proposal, which was felt to be balanced and fair;
- emphasis on the sensitivity of some of its elements for all the Member States, which might not only be exploited by populist forces but also presented from the standpoint of taxpayers;
- consequently, the need for the proposal to be accompanied by robust communication in order to explain the ins and outs; the importance of involving the Member States as well in the work of informing the public;
- the wish to allow for the possibility of letting Member States that granted high family benefits decide whether or not to index these benefits in line with the cost of living in the country where the beneficiary child was resident.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS pointed out that European law was based on the fundamental principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment.

Ms THYSEN recommended assessing the proposal from its different angles in order to appreciate its balance, while pointing out that in every Member State there

would always be populists to criticise some aspect. In any event, she stressed that the proposal for a regulation upheld the EU's principles of non-discrimination and equal treatment.

On the question of indexing family benefits on the basis of the children's Member State of residence, she pointed out that mobile citizens came under the social security system of the host country and were therefore entitled to equal treatment with the nationals of the host country. Exports of family benefits represented 1% of the total paid in the EU and the possibility of indexing them would allow savings of only around 0.30%, not to mention the administrative difficulties involved in implementing such an option.

At the same time, she said that the proposal, by codifying the case law of the EU Court of Justice, clearly indicated that Member States were not required to pay social benefits to persons who did not have the right of residence in their territory.

The PRESIDENT underlined the diverse situations existing in the Union with regard to social security and the lack of harmonisation of national systems. For this reason, he welcomed the proposal for a regulation tabled by Mr DOMBROVSKIS and Ms THYSEN, which was at the same time balanced and truly European, and congratulated them for their outstanding work. However, in the current climate, he was expecting lively debates in the Council.

Following this discussion, the Commission adopted the proposal for a regulation in COM(2016) 815/3, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment and the summary thereof in staff working documents SWD(2016) 460 and SWD(2016) 461, the contents of which were noted;

It also took note of the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SEC(2016) 539.

9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON REFORM RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REGULATION IN PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

(COM(2016) 820 AND /2; SWD(2016) 436 AND /2; RCC(2016) 157)

10. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL INTRODUCING A EUROPEAN SERVICES CARD AND RELATED ADMINISTRATIVE FACILITIES

(COM(2016) 824 TO /4; SWD(2016) 439; SWD(2016) 442; SEC(2016) 534; RCC(2016) 157)

11. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON THE LEGAL AND OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN SERVICES CARD INTRODUCED BY REGULATION [ESC REGULATION]

(COM(2016) 823 TO /3; SWD(2016) 437; SWD(2016) 438; SEC(2016) 533; RCC(2016) 157)

12. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON THE ENFORCEMENT OF DIRECTIVE 2006/123/EC ON SERVICES IN THE INTERNAL MARKET, LAYING DOWN A NOTIFICATION PROCEDURE FOR AUTHORISATION SCHEMES AND REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO SERVICES, AND AMENDING DIRECTIVE 2006/123/EC AND REGULATION (EU) 1024/2012 ON ADMINISTRATIVE COOPERATION THROUGH THE INTERNAL MARKET INFORMATION SYSTEM

(COM(2016) 821 AND /2; SWD(2016) 434; SWD(2016) 435; SEC(2016) 531; RCC(2016) 157)

13. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON A PROPORTIONALITY TEST BEFORE ADOPTION OF NEW REGULATION OF PROFESSIONS (COM(2016) 822 AND /2; SWD(2016) 463; SWD(2016) 462; SEC(2016) 535; RCC(2016) 157)

Mr KATAINEN opened the discussion on the set of measures proposed that day concerning the single market for services. He pointed out that the tertiary sector represented at least 70% of EU gross domestic product and employment. He therefore considered that the growth potential of the sector should be unlocked by adopting measures to facilitate the cross-border provision of services within the single market.

He stressed that the main aim of this set of measures was to boost the capacity of enterprises to provide their services throughout the whole of the Union, in particular through the introduction of a European services card, without encroaching on the prerogatives of the Member States.

This card was designed essentially to simplify the administrative procedures that had to be carried out when providing services in another Member State, while respecting the legislation in force and without weakening the provisions of the Posted Workers Directive (Directive 96/71/EC of 16 December 1996). While the European services card was one of the key elements of the set of measures, it was above all a technical tool that would make life easier for service providers wishing to extend their activities beyond the borders of their Member State.

Mr KATAINEN reviewed the political and historical background to the proposed measures. He said that the debates sparked at the time by the Directive of 12 December 2006 on services in the internal market (the ‘Services Directive’ or ‘Bolkestein Directive’) would probably be rekindled by the European services card. It was therefore important for the Commission to defend these initiatives robustly and with conviction by taking up the communication challenges involved and being

prepared to expose itself politically. Bearing in mind this context, the Commission should weigh its proposals judiciously.

Ms BIENKOWSKA took the floor and pointed out that the initiatives that were being tabled that day had been announced as an essential strand of the internal market strategy adopted by the Commission in October 2015. She stressed that their objective was to reduce administrative and regulatory obstacles so that service providers could benefit from new growth opportunities while guaranteeing the quality of the services provided to consumers. In her view, the insufficient growth of the EU's services sector would have justified more ambitious proposals, but their scope had been revised to take account of the political context and enable agreement to be reached by the Member States despite their different sensitivities.

She summarised the main objectives of the proposed initiatives, which were (i) to establish a notification procedure for authorisation schemes and requirements relating to services, (ii) to allow a proportionality check to be carried out before adopting new regulation of professions, (iii) to propose recommendations for reform of the regulation of professional services, and, lastly (iv) to introduce a European services card. She emphasised that these initiatives could not be compared with the Commission's previous proposals, which were aimed at establishing an overall legal framework to remove the barriers to the freedom of establishment of service providers and the free movement of services between Member States.

Specifically with regard to the European services card, its use was voluntary and it would not jeopardise any of the provisions of the Posted Workers Directive. However, she pointed out that this card would necessarily apply to posted workers, since they were one of the main categories of worker concerned by the improvements introduced by the new card, particularly as regards the reduction of the administrative burden.

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

- the value of this set of initiatives to promote the provision of cross-border services and develop the growth potential of the sector, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises, and job creation;
- the positive impact of the planned initiatives, which would strengthen competition in the services sector and make it possible to offer consumers more choice and better prices;
- approval for action at Union level to promote the cross-border provision of services and improve working conditions for cross-border workers;
- the prudent, balanced and pragmatic approach adopted in drawing up the set of proposals, which took into account Member States' sensitivities in order to facilitate an agreement between them;
- in the opinion of other Members of the Commission, a prudent approach should be adopted to the introduction of the European services card, since even if its purpose was to facilitate the work of cross-border enterprises, it would inevitably generate criticism given that politics was a matter of perceptions as well as facts;
- in this context, it was important not to allow the introduction of this card to polarise the debates too much, to the point of preventing an agreement between the Member States; the conclusions of the Bratislava summit on 16 September specifically recommended proposals that could bring Europeans together;
- questions about the added value of the European services card, the main new feature of which was to develop a computer system supported by a new database; doubts about the appropriateness of this initiative in a political context in which populist movements would not hesitate to caricature the initiative for electoral ends;

- the concern to avoid overlaps with the scope of the Posted Workers Directive and, more generally, with the EU *acquis* in the field of social policies, which was based on a specific approach, incorporated horizontal as well as sectoral instruments, and in which it was important to avoid creating confusion and prejudging future developments set out in the current Commission's political priorities;
- in the same line of reasoning, the need to remove from the text of the proposed initiatives any reference to the Posted Workers Directive, which was currently being revised after the adoption by the Commission on 8 March of the proposal for a directive amending Directive 96/71/EC of 16 December 1996 concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services, and to allow the Member States the time necessary to transpose them in their national legislation and implement them.

Mr KATAINEN noted the political and technical reservations that had been expressed concerning the introduction of the European services card. He felt that, on the basis of the views expressed in the discussion, the Commission could refine its proposal on this point, take better account of the sensitivities that could be aroused by the measures and thus encourage a consensus to secure their adoption.

It was important for the Commission to defend all its growth and job creation initiatives by an appropriate communication strategy in order to convince citizens and the Member States of the need for the measures and the expected benefits.

Ms BIENKOWSKA highlighted the constructive nature of the proposed approach, which would provide greater legal certainty for workers and enterprises operating in different Member States.

The PRESIDENT praised the quality of the work carried out by Ms BIENKOWSKA and Mr KATAINEN and their departments. He recommended revisiting the proposed package at the Commission's weekly meeting on

10 January 2017 in order to take on board the considerations that had emerged from that day's discussions. He asked the Members of the Commission to reflect also on the communication strategy that was to accompany the adoption of the package and to adapt the messages to each audience and each Member State.

In view of these considerations, the Commission, on a proposal from the PRESIDENT, decided to hold over adoption of the proposals in items 9 to 13 of the present minutes until the meeting on 10 January.

14. OTHER BUSINESS

14.1. COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION – GALILEO – DECLARATION OF INITIAL SERVICES (SEC(2016) 700 AND /2)

Mr KATAINEN asked Ms BIENKOWSKA to report on the latest developments concerning Galileo, the European satellite navigation system.

She explained that the Galileo system would officially begin to offer its initial services to public authorities, businesses and the public on 15 December. This was a major advance for Europe, the first achievement of its recent space strategy and the result of a concerted effort to design and build the most accurate satellite navigation system in the world. She welcomed this demonstration of Europe's technological excellence.

Galileo would now offer state-of-the-art positioning, navigation and timing services, for example (i) support for emergency search and rescue services, (ii) more accurate navigation for the general public via devices installed on smartphones and, a few years down the line, in vehicles, (iii) better synchronisation for critical infrastructure, for example banking and financial

transactions, telecommunications and energy distribution networks and (iv) secure services for public authorities, for example in civil protection and humanitarian aid and for customs officials and the police. The system would offer a particularly robust service during national emergencies or crisis situations, such as terrorist attacks, in order to ensure service continuity.

Ms BIENKOWSKA pointed out that this declaration of Galileo's initial services meant that its satellites and ground infrastructure were now operational. She noted that Galileo was fully interoperable with the GPS system but offered users more accurate and reliable positioning. There were currently 18 satellites in the Galileo constellation, all of which were already in orbit. The full constellation of 30 satellites would be completed by 2020.

The Commission approved the communication set out in SEC(2016) 700/2 and endorsed the declaration.

14.2. EXPIRY OF THE BLOCK EXEMPTION REGULATION IN THE INSURANCE SECTOR

(SEC(2016) 536; RCC(2016) 161)

The Commission took note of the background note distributed as SEC(2016) 536.

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The meeting closed at 14.47.