



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2021) 2362 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 9 February 2021

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2362nd meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Thursday 14 January 2021

(afternoon)

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance list	3-4
1. AGENDA (OJ(2021) 2362/FINAL)	5
2. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION ON THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE 'MINORITY SAFEPAK – ONE MILLION SIGNATURES FOR DIVERSITY IN EUROPE' (C(2021) 171 AND /2; RCC(2021) 3).....	5

Single sitting: Thursday 14 January 2021 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 16.49 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President
Mr HAHN	Member
Ms GABRIEL	Member
Mr SCHMIT	Member
Mr GENTILONI	Member
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member
Mr BRETON	Member
Ms FERREIRA	Member
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member
Mr REYNDEERS	Member
Ms DALLI	Member
Ms JOHANSSON	Member
Mr LENARČIČ	Member
Ms VÁLEAN	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member
Ms SIMSON	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member
Ms McGUINNESS	Member

PV(2021) 2362 final

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	Director-General, Legal Service
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication
Mr MAMER	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms DEPREZ, Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDA

(OJ(2021) 2362/FINAL)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda.

2. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION ON THE EUROPEAN CITIZENS' INITIATIVE 'MINORITY SAFEPAK – ONE MILLION SIGNATURES FOR DIVERSITY IN EUROPE'

(C(2021) 171 AND /2; RCC(2021) 3)

Ms JOUROVÁ presented the Communication on the citizens' initiative entitled 'Minority SafePack – One million signatures for diversity in Europe', which had been submitted to the Commission on 10 January 2020 after being signed by over one million European citizens.

This citizens' initiative aimed to improve the protection of persons belonging to national and linguistic minorities and strengthen cultural and linguistic diversity in the EU, and called on the European Union to adopt nine legislative acts to this end.

This was the fifth European citizens' initiative to have met the requirements set out in the applicable Regulation. Following a thorough examination of each of the nine proposals it contained, the Commission was now required to approve a communication setting out its legal and political conclusions on the initiative.

Ms JOUROVÁ began by saying that since 2013, when the initiative 'Minority SafePack – One million signatures for diversity in Europe' had been submitted for registration for the first time, a wide range of measures had been taken in the EU addressing several aspects of the proposals contained in the initiative. She cited as examples the Council Recommendation on a comprehensive approach to the teaching and learning of languages adopted in May 2019, the Commission Communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 approved in September 2020, the Commission's cooperation with and support for the Council of

Europe's European Centre for Modern Languages, and the recent announcement of the creation of the Competence Centre for the digital preservation and conservation of cultural heritage.

In addition, since 2013 important legislative acts had been adopted, such as the 2019 Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market and the 2018 Geo-blocking Regulation, which responded to the requests of the organisers of the European citizens' initiative and addressed the objectives of the initiative.

Lastly, she emphasised that important financial instruments had been put in place, in accordance with the aim of the initiative, for example under Erasmus, the Creative Europe programme, the European Social Fund and other cohesion funds that would be reorganised in the new Multiannual Financial Framework in order to facilitate access to these instruments.

In conclusion, she said that in its response the Commission fully acknowledged the importance of protecting national and linguistic minorities and cultural and linguistic diversity in the EU and that, while not considering it necessary to propose new specific legal acts, it was planning concrete follow-up measures in a number of policy areas. In particular, it planned to closely monitor the implementation of existing EU legislation, initiatives and projects. These measures could also include the development of guidelines to help Member States ensure that the measures they intended to take to promote the rights and culture of national minorities complied with the rules in force.

She stressed that even though the Commission's response was not of a legislative nature, as the organisers of the citizens' initiative wished, the Commission was committed to ensuring the protection of persons belonging to national and linguistic minorities and cultural and linguistic diversity in the EU through the specific follow-up measures referred to.

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

- in general terms, the importance and sensitivity of the issue of protecting national and linguistic minorities in the EU;
- for some, regret that the Commission, despite its competence in the areas concerned and the recent resolution of the European Parliament, did not plan to propose new legal acts as desired by the signatories of the European citizens' initiative;
- for others, the observation that the Commission's balanced response, its commitment to take concrete follow-up measures following a thorough examination, together with the debate encouraged by the citizens' initiative instrument, and the legislative acts or initiatives adopted most recently by the EU and cited by Ms JOUROVÁ, made it possible to respond to the organisers' requests on the basis of the legislation in force and in compliance with the subsidiarity principle;
- the need for the Members of the College to explain the arguments underpinning this decision in their communication activities;
- in line with the obligations laid down in the EU Treaties, the recommendation to draw up a set of minimum standards for the protection of the rights of national and linguistic minorities; the suggestion to return to this issue in the Commission's annual Report on compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The PRESIDENT remarked that the Commission had examined the citizens' initiative 'Minority SafePack – One million signatures for diversity in Europe' very carefully and had proposed concrete measures in reply to it.

Winding up the discussion, Ms JOUROVÁ stressed the constructive tone of the Commission's response to the organisers of the European citizens' initiative, whose efforts she welcomed.

At the end of this discussion, the Commission decided:

- to approve the Communication set out in COM(2021) 171/2;
- to notify it, for information, to the organisers of the citizens' initiative and the Member States;
- to transmit it, for information, to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

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The meeting closed at 17.05.