



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2021) 2379 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 23 June 2021

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2379th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 26 May 2021

(morning)

PV(2021) 2379 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance list	4-5
1. AGENDAS (OJ(2021) 2379/FINAL; SEC(2021) 2379/FINAL)	6
2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET (RCC(2021) 2379)	6
3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2374 TH , 2375 TH , 2376 TH , 2377 TH AND 2378 TH MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (21/22 AND 27 APRIL, 5, 12 AND 18 MAY 2021) (PV(2021) 2374; PV(2021) 2374, PART II AND /2; PV(2021) 2375; PV(2021) 2376)	6
4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (RCC(2021) 115)	6
5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2021) 28 AND /2).....	10
6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS.....	10
6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2021) 204 ET SEQ.).....	10
6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2021) 205 ET SEQ.)	10
6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2021) 206 ET SEQ.)	10
6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2021) 207 AND /2)	10
6.5. GRANTING OF AN EMPOWERMENT RELATING TO THE TRADE REGIME OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN THE FORM OF GOODS NOT COVERED BY ANNEX I TO THE TREATY (C(2021) 3370).....	11
6.6. GRANTING OF EMPOWERMENTS AND DELEGATIONS OF POWERS RELATING TO THE ADOPTION OF CERTAIN MEASURES UNDER REGULATION (EU) 2017/2394 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON COOPERATION BETWEEN NATIONAL AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION LAWS (C(2021) 3740)	11

7.	ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2021) 208).....	12
	<i>SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – COMMISSION DECISION ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE</i>	
	<i>ACTIVITY OF A FORMER MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION (C(2021) 9010).....</i>	<i>12</i>
8.	COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – EUROPEAN COMMISSION GUIDANCE ON STRENGTHENING THE CODE OF PRACTICE ON DISINFORMATION (COM(2021) 262 AND /2; RCC(2021) 118).....	12
9.	OTHER BUSINESS.....	17
9.1.	RESULTS OF THE GLOBAL HEALTH SUMMIT (ROME, 21 MAY 2021).....	17
9.2.	RESULTS OF THE SPECIAL EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING (BRUSSELS, 24 AND 25 MAY).....	19

Single sitting: Wednesday 26 May 2021 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.09 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 9.2 (in part)
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive 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 BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	
Ms McGUINNESS	Member	

(26 May 2021)

Absent:

Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member

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

Ms ARNOULD	Expert in Mr BORRELL's Office	
Mr GOLUBIEWSKI	Chef de cabinet to Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Item 8
Mr HORVÁTH	Expert in Mr VÁRHELYI's Office	

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	
Ms CABRAL	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Item 8
Ms SCHULTZ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC, Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2021) 2379/FINAL; SEC(2021) 2379/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(2021) 2379)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Friday 21 May 2021.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2374TH, 2375TH, 2376TH, 2377TH AND 2378TH MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (21/22 AND 27 APRIL, 5, 12 AND 18 MAY 2021)

(PV(2021) 2374; PV(2021) 2374, PART II AND /2; PV(2021) 2375; PV(2021) 2376)

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2374th, 2375th, 2376th, 2377th and 2378th meetings.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2021) 115)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Thursday 20 May 2021 (RCC(2021) 115).

The Commission approved the lines proposed for the following points:

– **2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – Common Agricultural Policy (CAP):**

- **Rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the Common agricultural policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Regulation) – JAHR report – 2018/0216 (COD)**
- **Financing, management and monitoring of the common agricultural policy and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 (Regulation) – MÜLLER report – 2018/0217 (COD)**
- **Amendment of Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products, (EU) No 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs, (EU) No 251/2014 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of aromatised wine products, (EU) No 228/2013 laying down specific measures for agriculture in the outermost regions of the Union and (EU) No 229/2013 laying down specific measures for agriculture in favour of the smaller Aegean islands (Regulation) – ANDRIEU report – 2018/0218 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 140/3.

- **Association of the Overseas Countries and Territories with the European Union including relations between the European Union on the one hand, and Greenland and the Kingdom of Denmark on the other (Council Decision) – PONGA report – 2018/0244 (CNS)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 146.

- **Health technology assessment and amendment of Directive 2011/24/EU (Regulation) – WÖLKEN report – 2018/0018 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 142.

- **COVID-19 – Digital Green Certificate:**
 - **Framework for the issuance, verification and acceptance of interoperable certificates on vaccination, testing and recovery to facilitate free movement during the COVID-19 pandemic (Digital Green Certificate) (Regulation) – LÓPEZ AGUILAR report – 2021/0068 (COD)**
 - **Framework for the issuance, verification and acceptance of interoperable certificates on vaccination, testing and recovery to third-country nationals legally staying or legally residing in the territories of Member States during the COVID-19 pandemic (Digital Green Certificate) (Regulation) – LÓPEZ AGUILAR report – 2021/0071 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 147.

- **Implementation of the Single European Sky (recast) (Regulation) – MARINESCU report – 2013/0186 (COD) / Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2018/1139 as regards the capacity of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency to act as Performance Review Body of the Single European Sky (Regulation) – LIBERADZKI report – 2020/0264 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 143.

- **Amendment of Directive 2006/1/EC on the use of vehicles hired without drivers for the carriage of goods by road (Directive) – MONTEIRO DE AGUIAR report – 2017/0113 (COD)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 145.

- **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) – BUŞOI report – 2020/0141 (NLE)**
- **Amendment of Decision 2003/76/EC establishing the measures necessary for the implementation of the Protocol, annexed to the Treaty establishing the European Community, on the financial consequences of the expiry of the ECSC Treaty and on the Research Fund for Coal and Steel (Council Decision) – VAN OVERTVELDT report – 2020/0142 (APP)**

Line set out in SI(2021) 149/2.

The Commission took note of the following points:

- **Guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 347/2013 (Regulation) – KRASNODEŃSKI report – 2020/0360 (COD)**

Information set out in SI(2021) 144.

- **Results of Parliament's May 2021 part-session**

Information set out in SP(2021) 327.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2021) 28 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2021) 28/2 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held by videoconference on Wednesday 19 May 2021.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

**6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED
(SEC(2021) 204 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 17 and 21 May 2021.

**6.2. EMPOWERMENT
(SEC(2021) 205 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 17 and 19 May 2021.

**6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2021) 206 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 17 and 22 May 2021 archived in Decide.

**6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2021) 207 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 25 and 28 May 2021.

**6.5. GRANTING OF AN EMPOWERMENT RELATING TO THE TRADE REGIME OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS IN THE FORM OF GOODS NOT COVERED BY ANNEX I TO THE TREATY
(C(2021) 3370)**

The Commission adopted the decision in C(2021) 3370.

The Commission decided to empower the Member of the Commission with responsibility for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises to adopt, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, certain decisions relating to the trade regime of agricultural products in the form of goods not covered by Annex I to the Treaty, subject to the conditions laid down in Articles 2 to 6 of the Decision.

**6.6. GRANTING OF EMPOWERMENTS AND DELEGATIONS OF POWERS RELATING TO THE ADOPTION OF CERTAIN MEASURES UNDER REGULATION (EU) 2017/2394 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON COOPERATION BETWEEN NATIONAL AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF CONSUMER PROTECTION LAWS
(C(2021) 3740)**

The Commission adopted the decision in C(2021) 3740.

The Commission decided to grant an empowerment to the Member of the Commission with responsibility for justice and consumers, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and a delegation of power to the Director-General of DG Justice and Consumers, with a view to adopting, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, certain measures under Regulation (EU) 2017/2394 of the European Parliament and of the Council on cooperation between national authorities responsible for the enforcement of consumer protection laws, subject to the conditions laid down in the Decision.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2021) 208)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

***SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – COMMISSION DECISION ON POST
TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITY OF A FORMER MEMBER OF THE
COMMISSION***

(C(2021) 9010)

The Commission adopted the Decision set out in C(2021) 9010.

The Commission specifically decided that the professional activity envisaged by Mr Miguel ARIAS CAÑETE after leaving office as a Member of the Commission were compatible with Article 245(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and with the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, subject to certain specific conditions and obligations, as set out in the Decision.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS –
EUROPEAN COMMISSION GUIDANCE ON STRENGTHENING THE
CODE OF PRACTICE ON DISINFORMATION**

(COM(2021) 262 AND /2; RCC(2021) 118)

At the PRESIDENT's invitation, Ms JOUROVÁ presented the guidance that the Commission intended to adopt that day to combat disinformation. This guidance had been announced in the European Democracy Action Plan, which had three pillars:

(i) ensuring free and fair elections, (ii) strengthening the media, and (iii) countering disinformation.

Ms JOUROVÁ began by noting that although disinformation was an old and complex problem, the speed and extent of its spread and the monetisation of disinformation were all new, as had been highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the vaccine debate in particular.

She said that Europeans were now more aware of the risks that disinformation posed with regard to specific social, political or geopolitical issues or, more broadly, democracy and elections.

Both foreign and domestic players used disinformation for economic and political gain, and while social media had many positive aspects, it also provided new tools and opportunities for disinformation to reach millions of people effortlessly.

In Ms JOUROVÁ's view, the main challenge in combating disinformation lay in the fact that disinformation was not illegal as such. A different approach should therefore be taken to it than to illegal content, which was addressed by the future Digital Services Act: the Act clearly set out platforms' responsibilities with regard to illegal content and laid down sanctions that could be imposed in the event of abuse. As regards disinformation, this legislation includes an obligation to mitigate risks, including through codes of conduct.

The Code of Practice on Disinformation – a self-regulatory tool put in place in 2018 – was the first and probably only tool of its kind to exist in the world. Its shortcomings, such as uneven implementation across languages, limited stakeholder participation and a lack of oversight, needed to be addressed. The guidance put forward that day laid out the European Union's vision of how social media platforms, the advertising industry and civil society should step up their efforts to counter online disinformation. In this regard, the guidance was the first step in

revising the 2018 Code and served as a guarantee that the new Code would be more robust and have its shortcomings remedied.

In the fight against disinformation, the EU's model was the only one in the world to supplement regulation – namely the Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act – with co-regulatory tools based on the Digital Services Act, without limiting free speech. Rather than assessing content alone, it also tackled the sources of disinformation, the channels used and the targets.

With regard to the sources of disinformation, Ms JOUROVÁ said that she was working with Mr BORRELL to create a toolbox to combat foreign interference. The channels of disinformation were addressed by the guidance being presented that day and by existing European digital rules. As for the targets of disinformation, every European had to develop their critical thinking; in this connection, it was vital to support media literacy and protect the media's independence.

The guidance did not aim to remove content that was harmful but legal. Rather, it set out to promote much-needed collaboration with all digital players – not just platforms – to create a more responsible digital information space.

To this end, the guidance set out clear expectations and parameters on how platforms and other stakeholders should step up their efforts to: (i) empower users, (ii) facilitate research, (iii) support fact-checkers to allow independent analysis, (iv) limit manipulation techniques such as bots and fake accounts, which allowed harmful content to reach millions of people, and (v) demonetise disinformation, because the economic incentives in the system were also a key factor in the spread of disinformation.

The new, strengthened Code of Practice would be rolled out alongside upcoming legislation on the transparency of political advertising, which Ms JOUROVÁ and Mr REYNDERS would present in the course of 2021.

Ms JOUROVÁ concluded by noting that while the Digital Services Act was the only tool allowing proper enforcement of the rules, a system for formally monitoring the Code of Practice's implementation should already be introduced to provide oversight and increase the accountability of digital platforms.

Mr BRETON noted that online disinformation was currently spreading at an unprecedented pace and had a very real impact on everyone's lives, as had been seen in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic and the vaccination campaign.

When Europe had adopted its Code of Practice in 2018, it had equipped itself with an innovative tool – the world's first such tool for countering disinformation. Unfortunately, the Code had not had many signatories.

The future Digital Services Act, put forward by the Commission in December 2020, would play a key role once the co-legislators had adopted it, as it would implement the various parties' obligations in combating disinformation. Once the platforms were subject to legal obligations, any failure on their part to fulfil the commitments laid down in the Code of Practice could be considered a breach of the rules, for which they could be penalised.

It was vital to adopt a comprehensive approach covering large and small platforms and the advertising industry. Moreover, there was a need to demonetise disinformation by tackling the phenomenon of algorithm-driven advertising.

Mr BRETON concluded by stressing the importance of combating foreign interference and everyday hybrid threats and expressing his satisfaction with the work done in this regard in collaboration with Mr BORRELL and Mr SCHINAS.

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

- full support for the guidance presented and its objectives;
- the need to preserve freedom of expression in the fight against disinformation;

- a reminder of the need to maintain the boundary between legal and illegal, including on the basis of the future case-law of national and European courts;
- the necessary political courage demanded by security issues, and the importance of using all available instruments in this area as well;
- the need for guidance with the broadest possible scope and for effective accountability of the various actors;
- the importance of recent technological developments and their implications in terms of the speed at which information in general was circulated and disseminated;
- the key role played by education in the fight against disinformation, in particular as regards children and minors;
- the desirability of promoting the emergence of genuinely independent fact-checkers;
- the necessity to ensure the resilience of the platform used in the context of the Conference on the Future of Europe;
- the need for the Commission to engage in political communication differentiated according to the Member States and Europe's regions, on the basis of tangible projects.

The PRESIDENT thanked all the speakers and congratulated Ms JOUROVÁ and Mr BRETON on the calibre of their ambitious text.

Following these presentations, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2021) 262/2 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

9.1. *RESULTS OF THE GLOBAL HEALTH SUMMIT (ROME, 21 MAY 2021)*

The PRESIDENT reported to the College on the Global Health Summit held in Rome on 21 May.

She began by emphasising that this was the first time the G20, in this case under its Italian Presidency, had devoted one of its summits to health issues. The aim had been to agree on a series of measures to speed up the end of the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide and to learn from this crisis to better prepare for the possibility of other future pandemics.

The summit had been successful, on the one hand because the participants had agreed on a number of important principles in a joint declaration, the ‘Rome Declaration’, and on the other because of the tangible proposals made in respect of COVID-19 vaccines.

She highlighted three important elements of the Rome Declaration. Firstly, the G20 launched an appeal for multilateralism in health, including a commitment to ensure open, resilient, diversified, safe, efficient and reliable global supply chains. She saw this as a fundamental commitment, bearing in mind that the G20 included in particular the United States, China, the European Union, Russia, India, South Africa and Latin America. Secondly, the Declaration provided for the development of an interoperable international early warning and surveillance system to detect possible pandemics, which would cover not only new viruses but also variants of the virus behind COVID-19. Thirdly, the Declaration sought to increase vaccine production capacity, including by working within the framework of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and the 2001 Doha Declaration on that agreement and public health. It thus promoted the use of tools such as voluntary licensing agreements for intellectual property.

The PRESIDENT explained that voluntary licensing was the best way to ensure the necessary transfer of technology and know-how while at the same time guaranteeing intellectual property rights. The G20 leaders had reaffirmed that the TRIPS Agreement and the Doha Declaration already envisaged compulsory licensing as a legitimate tool in times of crisis. However, developing countries were complaining about the difficulty of utilising this possibility.

The European Union intended to put forward a third way, through a proposal to be submitted to the World Health Organization (WHO), thus supporting the work carried out within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO). This proposal would be structured around three elements: (i) trade facilitation and trade disciplines related to export restrictions, (ii) support for the development of production, (iii) in terms of intellectual property, clarification and simplification of the use, where necessary, of compulsory licensing at times of crisis, as was the case with the current COVID-19 pandemic.

The PRESIDENT also cited two other key principles of the Rome Declaration: equitable access to vaccines and support for low- and middle-income countries to help them develop their own production capacities. Team Europe would contribute to this support, with the EU donating 100 million vaccine doses to the countries concerned by the end of 2021. The EU had also worked with its European industrial partners Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and Johnson&Johnson to make vaccine doses available quickly to low- and middle-income countries. These partners had pledged this year to provide 1.3 billion doses at production cost for low-income countries and at low cost for middle-income countries, a proportion of which would be distributed through COVAX.

Finally, the PRESIDENT reported that Team Europe would invest to support production capacity in Africa, which currently imported 99% of its available

vaccines. An initiative would be launched to develop domestic vaccine production with African partners. A budget of EUR 1 billion would be earmarked for this project.

The Commission took note of this information.

9.2. RESULTS OF THE SPECIAL EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETING (BRUSSELS, 24 AND 25 MAY)

The PRESIDENT then reported to the College on the discussions of the EU Heads of State or Government at the special meeting of the European Council on 24 and 25 May in Brussels.

She said that discussions had focused mainly on (i) the management of the COVID-19 pandemic, (ii) the Commission's forthcoming proposals under the European Green Deal and (iii) external relations, in particular relations with Belarus following the diversion of a Ryanair flight, and relations with the United Kingdom and Russia.

She began by referring to the discussions on the **health situation** linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and highlighted the support expressed by many leaders for the Commission's action, in particular for coordinating the supply of vaccines. She noted that by the end of the current week the EU would have delivered 300 million doses of vaccines and 245 million people, or 46% of the adult population, would have received at least one. She gave an update on the quantities of doses to be delivered in the second and third quarters. She reported that she had informed EU leaders about possible further delays in the coming months. She confirmed that the Commission was continuously monitoring the situation.

The PRESIDENT explained that the Heads of State or Government had also discussed the introduction of the EU digital Covid certificate, welcoming the speed with which the proposal for a Regulation had been adopted. The aim

was for the system to be technically operational as of 1 June 2021 in order to be deployed in mid-June, initially in the Member States that were ready, the others joining the system as and when they were ready.

The meeting had discussed the content of the EU digital Covid certificate, the period of validity of the results of screening tests and the criteria for confirming the recovery of patients who had contracted the virus. On the last point, it would be necessary to determine when another vaccination would be needed to prolong the immunity of patients already vaccinated. She confirmed that almost 1.8 billion doses of vaccine would still be delivered to the EU, so there would be enough doses for the next vaccination campaigns.

She added that in order to facilitate free movement, the leaders had also called for the Council Recommendation on travel within the EU to be reviewed by mid-June, and had welcomed the revision of the Council Recommendation on non-essential travel to the EU.

Finally, she turned to the issue of the vaccination of children. The first vaccines developed for children by Pfizer-BioNTech were currently being approved by the European Medicines Agency, while those from Moderna would be submitted to the Agency shortly. Doses would therefore be available for vaccination of the very young in the coming weeks.

On the subject of the **European Green Deal**, the PRESIDENT reported on the constructive discussion among the Heads of State or Government after she had outlined to them the key elements of the 12 ‘Fit for 55’ proposals to be presented by the Commission the following month. The objective of the package had not been called into question, and discussion had focused only on the way in which the measures would be implemented. The proposals would be structured around two work streams, namely extending the European greenhouse gas Emission Trading System (ETS) to maritime transport and aviation and revising the Effort-Sharing Regulation on reducing

such emissions in sectors not covered by the ETS. She said that the Member States had expressed their views on these different points, some focusing mainly on the concept of fairness and others on the concepts of cost efficiency and convergence. Some had expressed the wish to promote their particular strengths, for example in terms of renewable energy. In any event, she stressed that all sides would have to do more and that the upcoming talks on the sharing of these efforts would no doubt be intense.

She also said that each of the ‘Fit for 55’ proposals would be the subject of an impact assessment, and the Commission had proposed to communicate the relevant data to the Member States so that they could do their own national analyses.

On **Belarus**, she described the diversion of a civil aviation flight by the current regime as scandalous, recalling that it was an intra-European flight between Greece and Lithuania. The European Council had decided that additional sanctions would be imposed on those involved in the incident and that businesses and economic entities that financed the regime would also be sanctioned.

She also pointed out that, since Belarus had used control over its airspace to commit state hijacking, the security and safety of flights in Belarusian airspace could no longer be ensured. Measures had therefore been taken to ban Belarusian airlines from overflying EU airspace and to shut EU airports to those airlines.

She reiterated that the European Council had demanded that Roman Protasevitch and Sofia Sapega be released immediately and that their freedom of movement be guaranteed.

As regards external relations, the PRESIDENT reported that the members of the European Council had had a strategic debate on the EU’s relations with **Russia**, following which the High Representative of the Union for Foreign

Affairs and Security Policy and the Commission had been tasked with presenting a report on the subject, which would be discussed by the European Council at its meeting in June.

The Heads of State or Government had also discussed relations with the **United Kingdom** for the first time since the entry into force of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement between the two parties.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ acknowledged that the beginning of the new relationship with the United Kingdom was not without tensions, which mainly concerned the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. He said that he was actively working with his British counterpart to de-escalate the current frictions. The Trade and Cooperation Agreement provided the Union with solid means of enforcing the commitments entered into.

The PRESIDENT welcomed the fact that at the special meeting of the European Council, EU leaders had reiterated their unity as regards implementing the agreements with the UK. She said that there was no alternative to the full and correct implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. The Protocol was the only possible solution to ensure peace and stability on the island of Ireland and to protect the integrity of the EU's single market. The EU would not hesitate to use all the means at its disposal under the Trade and Cooperation Agreement to guarantee that dual objective. She said there had to be a continuous effort to explain that the problems identified today stemmed not from the Protocol itself, but from the UK's withdrawal from the Union.

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

Management of the COVID-19 pandemic

- the importance, in the context of international discussions on the need to increase vaccine production capacities, of ensuring that the measures taken were compatible with the rules laid down and contemplated by the World Trade Organization;
- the advisability of addressing in particular the issue of export control measures in this context as well as ways to accelerate the development and deployment of vaccines worldwide and to work with industry to increase its manufacturing, production and distribution capacities, including through compulsory licensing;
- the observation that the US proposal to suspend patents to speed up global vaccine production had for the moment still not progressed beyond the announcement stage and no specific text had yet been put forward by Washington;
- hence the need to continue close coordination with the US government and in general to promote greater reciprocity in vaccine imports and exports by establishing in particular a link between the level of immunity in the countries concerned and the applicable export control restrictions;
- the reminder that Pfizer-BioNTech currently exported the majority of the vaccines it produced in the EU and supplied only 35% to the Member States;
- the high degree of dependence of certain third countries, such as Japan, on supplies of vaccines produced in the EU;
- the need to monitor vaccine production and distribution closely in order to guarantee the availability of vaccines in successive Member State vaccination programmes;

- with regard to the adoption of the Regulation on the EU digital Covid certificate, the Commission's efforts to promote a compromise by mobilising the necessary funds to make screening tests accessible at an affordable price;
- the balanced compromise reached on the lifting of certain health restrictions for holders of a digital Covid certificate and the commitment of Member States not to adopt additional restrictive measures while having the possibility of applying an 'emergency brake' in the event of a resurgence of the epidemic;
- the Commission's commitment to submit a report to the co-legislators on the use of tests for the detection of antibodies in the context of the lifting of health restrictions;
- the encouraging progress made in the technical implementation of the digital Covid certificate, prepared in close coordination with Member States, so that the system could be operational before the start of the summer season;
- for some, the advisability of adopting a flexible approach in order to possibly adapt the issuance criteria and the scope of the digital Covid certificate in the light of the development of scientific knowledge;
- the desirability of considering the gradual lifting of restrictions, and in particular the quarantine obligation, for holders of a certificate;
- the public support for the creation of the digital Covid certificate proposed by the Commission insofar as it would restore the freedom of movement of persons in the near future;
- the importance of swiftly submitting to the Council the proposal for a revision of the recommendation on EU internal travel;

- the need to ensure overall coherence between the Regulation on the digital Covid certificate and the proposals for the revision of the Council recommendation on EU internal travel and the Council recommendation on non-essential travel to the EU;
- the work to be continued in order to determine the period of validity of PCR tests and to define the criteria to be met in order to be considered immune to the COVID-19 virus after having contracted it;
- the questions still to be settled regarding the issuing of digital Covid certificates to third-country nationals during their stay in the EU;
- the need for the Commission to continue to closely coordinate the Member States' actions, in particular as regards the implementation of the digital Covid certificate;
- the case for emphasising the EU's capacity to respond rapidly to emergencies for the benefit of citizens;
- the usefulness of introducing measures to neutralise communication campaigns against vaccination using messages and information tailored to each Member State and each audience;

European Green Deal

- the substantive question of whether all Member States would achieve the same greenhouse gas emissions efficiency per unit of GDP under the Effort-Sharing Regulation;
- the need for a thorough examination by Member State of the social impact of the 'Fit for 55' measures;

Crisis with Belarus

- the speed and firmness with which the EU reacted to the diversion of an internal flight, which represented a major incident for the civil aviation sector;
- the hope that the economic sanctions against the Belarusian regime, which would be subject to Council approval, would produce results on the ground;
- the call to be made to Member States to put an end to their investments in Belarus;
- the mention of the recommendations made to Member States by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) that European airlines avoid overflying Belarusian airspace;
- the announcement of the International Civil Aviation Organization meeting on 27 May, which was mandated by the European Council to investigate urgently the circumstances of the forced landing in Belarus.

Members of the College came back to the host country's health rules and restrictions applicable to travel. They mentioned the difficulty imposed by the quarantine obligation in Belgium when travelling abroad for more than 48 hours in view of the numerous missions they had to carry out as part of their mandate.

Mr HAHN stressed the importance of complying with the quarantine and test measures to be observed on returning from essential travel abroad for the diplomatic missions and international organisations established in Belgium.

The PRESIDENT concluded the discussion by announcing that she would have a bilateral meeting with the UK Prime Minister, at the latter's request, at the G7 meeting to be held on 11-13 June in the United Kingdom and by

recalling that some of the issues raised that day would also be discussed at the EU-US summit in mid-June.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting closed at 11.36.