



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

**PV(2004)1682 final**

Strasbourg, 14 December 2004

**MINUTES**  
**of the 1682nd meeting of the Commission**  
**held in Brussels**  
**(Berlaymont)**  
**on Thursday 9 December 2004**  
**(morning)**

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These minutes were approved by the Commission at its 1683<sup>rd</sup> meeting, held in Strasbourg on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2004.

They contain 25 pages.

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**Single sitting: Thursday 9 December (morning)**

The sitting opened at 0930 hours with Mr Barroso, President, in the chair.

Present:

|                    |                |                       |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Mr BARROSO         | President      |                       |
| Ms WALLSTRÖM       | Vice-President |                       |
| Mr VERHEUGEN       | Vice-President |                       |
| Mr BARROT          | Vice-President |                       |
| Mr KALLAS          | Vice-President |                       |
| Mr FRATTINI        | Vice-President |                       |
| Ms REDING          | Member         | Item 14               |
| Mr DIMAS           | Member         |                       |
| Mr ALMUNIA         | Member         |                       |
| Ms HÜBNER          | Member         |                       |
| Mr BORG            | Member         |                       |
| Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ    | Member         |                       |
| Mr FIGEL'          | Member         | Except item 13        |
| Mr KYPRIANOU       | Member         |                       |
| Mr REHN            | Member         |                       |
| Mr MICHEL          | Member         | Items 13 to 14        |
| Mr KOVÁCS          | Member         |                       |
| Ms KROES           | Member         | Except items 11 to 13 |
| Ms FISCHER BOEL    | Member         |                       |
| Ms FERRERO-WALDNER | Member         | Except item 13        |
| Mr McCREEVY        | Member         |                       |
| Mr ŠPIDLA          | Member         |                       |
| Mr MANDELSON       | Member         | Item 14               |
| Mr PIEBALGS        | Member         |                       |

**The following also sat in**

|                        |                                           |                     |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Mr PETITE              | Director-General, Legal Service           |                     |
| Mr VALE DE ALMEIDA     | Chef de cabinet to the President          |                     |
| Mr DE OLIVEIRA E SOUSA | Director-General, Press and Communication |                     |
| Ms LE BAIL             | Commission Spokeswoman                    |                     |
| Mr KREUZHUBER          | Spokesman                                 |                     |
| Ms UDWIN               | Spokesman                                 | Items 11 and 12     |
| Ms ITALIANER           | Deputy Chef de cabinet to the President   | Items 11 to 14      |
| Mr THEBAULT            | Chief Adviser in the President's Office   |                     |
| Mr ANNERBERG           | Chef de cabinet to Ms Wallström           | Items 1 to 8        |
| Mr CHANTERIE           | A member of Ms Reding's staff             |                     |
| MR DRÖLL               | Chef de cabinet to Mr Potočník            | Items 11 to 14      |
| Ms WEYAND              | Chef de cabinet to Mr Michel              |                     |
| Mr SMULDERS            | Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms KROES        | Items 11 to 13      |
| Mr SCHWAIGER           | Deputy Chef de cabinet to                 |                     |
|                        | Ms FERRERO-WALDNER                        | Items 11 to 14      |
| Mr FRASER              | Chef de cabinet to Mr MANDELSON           | Items 1 to 13       |
| Mr MOAVERO MILANESI    | Secretariat-General                       | Items 1 to 8 and 14 |
| Mr BISARRE             | Secretariat-General                       | Items 1 to 8 and 14 |
| Mr SERVOZ              | Secretariat-General                       | Items 1 to 8 and 14 |
| Mr LEIGH               | External Relations DG                     | Items 11 and 12     |

Secretary: Mr O'SULLIVAN, Secretary-General, assisted by Mr KERSTING, Unit Head in the Secretariat-General.

**1. AGENDAS AND QUARTERLY ROLLING PROGRAMME  
(OJ(2004)1682/3; SEC(2004)1526/2; SEC(2004)1563)**

The Commission took note of that day's agenda, the tentative agendas for future meetings, and the rolling programme of items to be entered on the agenda from 14 December 2004 to 22 February 2005.

**2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET  
(SEC(2004)1682)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 6 December.

**3. MINUTES OF 1681<sup>st</sup> MEETING (1 December)  
(PV(2004)1681)**

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1681<sup>st</sup> meeting.

**4. WRITTEN PROCEDURES AND EMPOWERMENT**

**4.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED  
(SEC(2004)1527)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 29 November and 3 December 2004.

**4.2. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES**  
**(SEC(2004)1528)**

The Commission took note of written procedures initiated between 29 November and 3 December for the adoption of decisions with political implications.

**4.3. EMPOWERMENT**  
**(SEC(2004)1529 et seq.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the empowerment procedure between 29 November and 3 December.

**4.4. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation procedure between 29 November and 3 December, as archived on the "Greffé 2000" (Registry) website.

**5. COMMISSION DECISION RELATING TO A PROCEEDING UNDER  
ARTICLE 8(3) OF COUNCIL REGULATION (EEC) No 4064/89 ON THE  
CONTROL OF CONCENTRATIONS BETWEEN UNDERTAKINGS  
(CASE No COMP/M.3440 – EDP/ENI/EDP)  
(C(2004)4715 to /7; SEC(2004)1565)**

The Commission:

- took note of the opinion of the Advisory Committee on Concentrations of 26 November as set out in C(2004)4715/2;
- took note of the final report of the Hearing Officer of 29 November in C(2004)4715/3;

- adopted, in the authentic language (English), the decision in C(2004)4715/5, declaring the merger operation planned by Energias de Portugal SA and ENI Portugal Investment S.p.A (joint control of Gás de Portugal SGPS S.A.) incompatible with the common market;
- decided that the following versions of its decision would be notified to the companies concerned: C(2004)4715/6 to Energias de Portugal SA and C(2004)4715/7 to ENI S.p.A), together with the final report of the Hearing Officer;
- decided that the most important parts of the decision, the opinion of the Advisory Committee and the final report of the Hearing Officer would be published in all official languages in the Official Journal of the European Union (with all business secrets removed);
- decided to publish the decision (with business secrets removed) on the Internet.

**6. COMMISSION DECISION ON THE APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 81 OF THE EC TREATY AND ARTICLE 53 OF THE EEA AGREEMENT (CASE COMP/E-2/37.533 – CHOLINE CHLORIDE)  
(C(2004)4717 to /14; SEC(2004)1565; SEC(2004)1577)**

The Commission:

- took note of the opinions of the Advisory Committee on Restrictive Practices and Dominant Positions, dated 29 November 2004 and 6 December 2004, as set out in C(2004)4717/2 (first opinion) and C(2004)4717/5 and /11 (second opinion);
- took note of the final report of the Hearing Officer of 2 December in C(2004)4714/4;

- adopted, in the authentic languages (English, French and German), the decision set out in C(2004)4717/6 and /12, noting that Akzo Nobel N.V., with Akzo Nobel Nederland B.V., Akzo Nobel Chemicals International B.V., Akzo Nobel Chemicals B.V. and Akzo Nobel Functional Chemicals B.V., BASF A.G., Bioproducts Incorporated, Chinook Group Limited Partnership, with Chinook Group Limited, DuCoa, L.P. and UCB S.A. had infringed Article 81(1) of the EC Treaty and, with effect from 1 January 1994, Article 53(1) of the EEA Agreement and imposing fines totalling €66 340 000 on some of these companies;
- decided that the following versions of its decision would be notified to the companies concerned: C(2004)4717/7 and /13 to Akzo Nobel N.V., with Akzo Nobel Nederland B.V., Akzo Nobel Chemicals International B.V., Akzo Nobel Chemicals B.V. and Akzo Nobel Functional Chemicals B.V., C(2004)4717/8 and /14 to Bioproducts Incorporated, Chinook Group Limited Partnership, with Chinook Group Limited, and DuCoa, L.P., C(2004)4717/9 to BASF A.G. and C(2004)4717/10 to UCB S.A., accompanied by the final report of the Hearing Officer;
- decided that the most important parts of the decision, as well as the opinions of the Advisory Committee and the final report of the Hearing Officer, would be published in all official languages in the Official Journal of the European Union (with all business secrets removed);
- decided to publish the decision (with business secrets removed) on the Internet.

## **7. RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES**

***VISIT BY Mr MICHEL TO ETHIOPIA AND KENYA***  
***(SEC(2004)1583 and /2)***

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr MICHEL in SEC(2004)1583 and /2.

**8. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS**  
**(SEC(2004)1557)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group held on 3 December (SEC(2004)1557).

It paid particular attention to the following:

**8.1. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT**

**i) Results of part-session of 1 to 2 December**  
**(SP(2004)2999)**

The Commission took note of the information supplied relating to Parliament's part-session of 1 and 2 December (SP(2004)2999).

**ii) Action to be taken on Parliament's opinions**  
**(SP(2004)3051)**

The Commission approved the proposed empowerment decisions relating to action to be taken on the amendments presented by Parliament under the codecision and consultation procedures (SP(2004)3051).

**iii) Preparations for December II part-session**  
**(points 1.2 and 2.2.1 of the record)**

In accordance with the rules in force, the Commission authorised the relevant Commission Members to take a position on Parliament's

amendments to its proposals, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms WALLSTRÖM and any other Members associated.

It paid particular attention to the following:

- NOVAK Report - Europass - COM(2003)796 - 2003/0307 (COD)  
The Commission adopted the line set out in SP(2004)2985.
- STURDY Report - Pesticide residues - COM(2003)117 - 2003/0052 (COD)  
The Commission adopted the line proposed in SP(2004)2989 and authorised Mr KYPRIANOU to maintain contacts with Parliament and the Council to help reach an agreement at second reading.

iv) **Action taken on Parliament's opinions and resolutions**  
(point 1.7 of the record)

The Commission adopted and decided to transmit to Parliament document SP(2004)3019/3 on the Commission communication on the action taken on the opinions and resolutions adopted by Parliament at the October I part-session, to which the Commission had undertaken to give a answer.

v) **Implementation of the framework agreement between the Commission and Parliament: state of play in discussions under way**  
(point 4.4 of the record)

Ms WALLSTRÖM reported on the renegotiation of the framework agreement between the Commission and Parliament. The first meeting of the high-level technical group had been held that week, and Ms WALLSTRÖM was hoping to apprise the Commission of the results of the preparatory work around mid-January. She reported on certain factors on which agreement had already been reached and on other matters where further negotiations would be needed. She thanked Members for their contributions to preparations for the new framework

agreement, but added that internal dialogue would also be needed to assess the recent process of hearings of Members of the new Commission by parliamentary committees.

The Commission took note of this information.

## **8.2. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL**

### **vi) Sensitive matters**

(points 1.11 and 3 of the record)

Regarding the financial perspective for 2007-2013, Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ reported on the state of play of discussions in Council bodies and in the temporary parliamentary committee.

The Commission took note of this information and held an in-depth exchange of views on the negotiations for the next financial perspective, with particular reference to the following aspects:

- the vital importance of this matter, which was one of the Commission's major political priorities for 2005;
- the firm support that this Commission attached to the previous Commission's approach, accepting the current proposals which were the expression of a large-scale political ambition and project reflecting a very broad consensus;
- the need to exploit the political momentum and avoid all delays which would have negative consequences in other subject areas such as cohesion policy or research; the objective was to reach an overall agreement in June 2005;
- the leverage effect of the Commission's proposals for achieving the political objectives it had set itself in terms of competitiveness, cohesion and security, notably in the context of the Lisbon process;

- the substantial role to be played by the Commission in the negotiation process;
- the best way of gaining the support of the general public, Parliament and the Member States for the political project defended by the Commission, and particularly the common, structured effort to be undertaken in explaining the effectiveness of Community action and its added value, based on targeted information and communication initiatives.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT noted that there was a very broad consensus within the Commission in support of the principles and proposals put forward by the previous Commission, the aim being to reach agreement in accordance with the timetable set. The package now before the co-legislators laid the right basis for the interinstitutional negotiations. The PRESIDENT pointed to the need, in the interests of coherence vis-à-vis the outside world, to speedily complete the important proposals that still had to be added to the package. Consequently, he asked the Members responsible for submitting the relevant proposals to see that they were finalised in good time for adoption in the first quarter of 2005. The PRESIDENT concluded by emphasising the spirit of collective responsibility that should prevail in the negotiation process. He asked all Members to contribute actively to concerted communication effort and stated that he was planning to arrange for the Commission to be kept regularly informed on this matter.

vii) **Preparations for Council meetings**

(point 2.2 of the record)

**Proposal for a Council Decision fixing the financial contributions to be paid by the Member States to the European Development Fund (first instalment for 2005).**

(SI(2004)1035)

The Commission authorised its departments to accept the Presidency compromise, in accordance with the line set out in SI(2004)1035 and subject to the Legal Service's observation concerning the wording of item 4.

**Proposal for a European Parliament and Council directive on batteries and accumulators and spent batteries and accumulators.**

(SI(2004)1034 to /6)

The Commission authorised Mr DIMAS to support the Presidency compromise at the Council meeting (Environment) on 20 December in accordance with the line set out in SI(2004)1034/5. It also authorised Mr DIMAS to have a statement, the text of which was in SP(2004)1034/6, entered in the Council minutes.

**8.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT**

*(point 5.3 of the record)*

The Commission asked that each Directorate-General designate a liaison officer for relations with national parliaments.

**9. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS**  
**(SEC(2004)1530/2)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**  
**(PERS(2004)232)**

**9.1. DG ESTAT - POST OF DIRECTOR-GENERAL**  
**(PERS(2004)166 to /4)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director-General, Development (PERS(2004)166 and /3).

The Commission took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 5 and 11 November (PERS(2004)166/2 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to consider the applicant's qualifications for the post. In this connection, it took note of the assessment of the PRESIDENT, Mr KALLAS and Mr ALMUNIA, concerning in particular the abilities of the candidate selected as regards management and mobilisation of staff of the Directorate-General, which was emerging from a difficult transition period.

In the light of the above, the Commission, on a proposal from Mr Kallas, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr ALMUNIA, decided to appoint Mr Günther HANREICH to the post.

This decision would take effect on 16 December.

The Commission thanked M. VANDEN ABEELE, current Director-General of Eurostat, for the very high quality of the work he had done in this post.

**9.2. DG REGIO/A - POST OF DIRECTOR  
(PERS(2004)175 to /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a) (i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the function of Director of the Resources Directorate in the Regional Policy DG (PERS(2004)175).

The Commission took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 3 and 25 November (PERS(2004)175/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. It also examined the reports on their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr HÜBNER, it then decided to appoint Mr Jean-Marie SEYLER to the post.

This decision would take effect on a date to be fixed later.

**OTHER MATTERS**

**9.3. ACTIVITIES OF Mr BYRNE AFTER LEAVING THE COMMISSION  
(SEC(2004)1566)**

The Commission approved the communication in SEC(2004)1566 concerning the nature of the activities planned by Mr BYRNE after leaving the Commission. It concluded in particular that, subject to certain conditions, these activities were compatible with the last paragraph of Article 213 of the EC Treaty.

## **10. TRENDS IN THE MEMBER STATES (SEC(2004)1580 and /2)**

Ms WALLSTRÖM referred to the main events in November, raised in her information note distributed as SEC(2004)1580 and /2. She highlighted the positive trends in public opinion regarding aspects such as: the Member States' membership of the European Union; public trust in the European institutions; acceptance of the idea of a European Constitution; support for the common foreign and security policy; the enhanced democratic credibility emerging after the resolution of the difficulties with the appointment of the new Commission.

More generally, Ms WALLSTRÖM pointed to the usefulness of the monthly information notes to the Commission on trends in the Member States as a means of taking stock of the development of public perceptions of current affairs in Europe, and particularly of what the Commission was doing. She asked Members to make the fullest use of this tool, without prejudice to efforts to be made to boost its analytical capacity. She asked her colleagues to share with her any suggestion they might have to improve the content and / or presentation of these notes.

The PRESIDENT supported Ms WALLSTRÖM's remarks on the importance of this information tool. He echoed her call for Members to commit to using and improving it. He hoped that, once the tool had been refined, it would be used for the in-depth analyses of trends in public opinion which the Commission regularly undertook.

- 11. COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO THE COUNCIL ON THE  
COMMISSION PROPOSALS FOR ACTION PLANS UNDER THE  
EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY (ENP)  
(COM(2004)795 and /2)**
- 12. PROPOSAL FOR EU ACTION PLANS WITH MOLDOVA, MOROCCO,  
THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY, ISRAEL, UKRAINE, TUNISIA,  
JORDAN  
(COM(2004)787 to /3; COM(2004)788 to /3; COM(2004)789 to /3;  
COM(2004)790 to /3; COM(2004)791 to /3; COM(2004)792 to /3;  
COM(2004)796 to /3; SEC(2004)1564)**

Ms FERRERO-WALDNER introduced the communication and the proposals for actions plans now before the Commission, which were the operational follow-up to the previous Commission's communications on the European neighbourhood policy (COM(2003)104 final and COM(2004)373 final). She commented particularly on the objective of this new approach, which was to establish a stable circle of partners in friendship around the enlarged Union on the basis of common values shared with those partners. The action plans that she was proposing had been designed to meet those partners' specific interests; the plans had been established in close cooperation with them. Ms FERRERO-WALDNER stated that the action plans expressed a real commitment on both sides and would help to strengthen the sound management of public affairs and the rule of law by supporting prosperity and reform and economic modernisation efforts. After reviewing the individual action plans, paying special attention to the possibility for the partners in question to take part in certain Community programmes, she stated that a second series would follow later in accordance with the agreed schedule (preparations for factual country reports and then specific action plans) and reminded the meeting of the proposal adopted by the Commission in September 2004 establishing a European neighbourhood and partnership instrument (ENPI) under the new financial perspective 2007-2013. Ms FERRERO-WALDNER concluded by drawing the Commission's attention to the need to devote the necessary human and financial resources to guaranteeing the

successful implementation of the new European neighbourhood policy, in particular as regards cross-border cooperation.

The Commission took note of this presentation and held an in-depth discussion on the dossier as a whole, highlighting:

- the vital importance of devoting the necessary political attention to the new policy towards neighbouring countries and its contribution to the Commission's strategic objectives for the duration of its term of office;
- the purpose of the process;
- as regards Israel, the vital breakthrough with the planned cooperation on controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction;
- as regards Ukraine, the Commission's solidarity and firm commitment to the democratisation process, the Commission recommending that the Council submit the action plan for the approval of the EU-Ukraine Cooperation Council once the development of the situation in the country, particularly free and fair presidential elections in line with OSCE criteria, made it possible to consider implementing it;
- the account taken of regional and cross-border cooperation, including security and the fight against terrorism.

The PRESIDENT supported Ms FERRERO-WALDNER's statement, warmly thanking both her and Mr VERHEUGEN, who had been responsible for the dossier in the previous Commission, the relevant interdepartmental working party and all the officials who had been involved in the lengthy preparation of the dossier. He welcomed the initiative taken and pointed to the strategic importance that he attached to the new policy towards neighbouring countries, regarding it as one of the priorities of the Commission's external relations, given among other things its impact in terms of security and stability.

After its discussion, the Commission:

- approved the communication in COM(2004)795/2 and the proposals for European Union action plans with Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Israel, Ukraine, Tunisia and Jordan in COM(2004)787/3, COM(2004)788/3, COM(2004)789/3, COM(2004)790/3, COM(2004)791/3, COM(2004)792/3 and COM(2004)796/3 respectively;
- decided to transmit the communication and the seven proposals to the Council and, for information, to Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

### **13. COUNCIL MEETINGS** **(SI(2004)1041)**

#### ***13.1. GENERAL AFFAIRS AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS (BRUSSELS, 13 and 14 DECEMBER)*** ***(SEC(2004)1580)***

The Commission took note of the information supplied orally by Ms WALLSTRÖM to back up her information note distributed as SEC(2004)1580.

Looking beyond the question dealt with in that note, and bearing in mind that the information campaigns in the Member States relating to the ratification of the Constitution fell within the responsibility of the national authorities, the Commission confirmed the value of supporting the efforts made at national level. It was confirmed that such support could, if necessary, include direct involvement of Commission Members in specific actions organised by national authorities. The PRESIDENT asked Members to inform Ms WALLSTRÖM whenever they took part in efforts undertaken by the Member States so that proper coordination and transparency could be secured.

The Commission took note of Ms WALLSTRÖM's intention of supplying it with relevant information on progress with the ratification of the Constitution on a bimonthly basis.

**13.2. ACCESSION NEGOTIATIONS WITH ROMANIA**  
**(SEC(2004)1588)**

Mr REHN gave a brief oral presentation in support of his information note in SEC(2004)1588.

The Commission commented on the information supplied, more particularly as regards the safeguard mechanisms. It welcomed the prospect of a positive outcome of the accession negotiations with Romania at the ministerial meeting scheduled for 14 December 2004.

**14. GENERAL DEBATE ON THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEW COMMISSION 2005 - 2009**  
**(SEC(2004)1574)**

The PRESIDENT introduced the debate by presenting his analysis of the current situation of the Union and the challenges facing the new Commission, whose term of office was beginning at a crucial time. He emphasised the importance of the fact that this debate was being held before the finalisation of the Work programme for 2005 and preparations for the Annual Policy Strategy 2006 (particularly so as to be able to supply the necessary political foundation for that work), and pleaded for the Union's strategic objectives to focus on a dynamic partnership for change with prosperity, solidarity and security as its main objectives. He emphasised the importance of specifically emphasising the implementation of existing rules and regulations and the need for the Union to strictly apply rules aiming to improve the regulations. To provide a framework for the discussion, he asked Members a number of questions concerning their view of the approach he had set out, the priorities and initiatives that they regarded as most important, the advisability of

insisting on a reformist approach in the partnership in question, the links that should be established between the strategic objectives and the Lisbon strategy and the instruments that they would regard as most useful for making such a partnership work.

Following this introduction, the Commission held a general discussion on the Union's strategic objectives for 2005-2009. This covered the following points in particular:

- the pertinence of the main objectives of prosperity, solidarity and security and the links and relationships between them;
- the usefulness of these objectives in order to preserve and adapt the European social model;
- the role to be played by the Union's external responsibilities (fourth objective or consequence of internal policies);
- the choice of initiatives to be regarded as particularly essential within the three objectives mentioned, many speakers also emphasising the importance of presenting very practical objectives;
- the importance or not of highlighting the change aspect and a reformist approach in devising the strategic objectives;
- the conviction that attaining these objectives demanded action, inaction not being an option;
- the objective of growth and the Lisbon Strategy: the relationships between the two; the need to focus a number of priorities on this; the need to bring Member States face to face with their responsibilities as regards the achievement of the Lisbon goals (for instance in the budgetary context); the truly vital importance of knowledge, research and innovation for growth; the advisability or not of presenting the strategic objectives at the same time as the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy;

- the need to put the emphasis on consolidating what had already been achieved, and more specifically on the implementation and practical application of existing regulations;
- the importance of strict compliance with “*Better Regulation*” rules; in this connection, the specific importance of making use of instruments such as impact assessments;
- the need to improve communication capacity, particularly so as to be able to engage in dialogue with the general public and explain the Union’s choices, for instance to focus on certain objectives or priorities rather than others;
- the need, particularly in the budgetary context, to clearly demonstrate the value added by Community action.

The Commission took note that:

- there was a broad consensus on the need to work for a partnership of all the players concerned (institutions, Member States, national authorities, civil society, citizens) as the framework for pursuing the objectives of prosperity, solidarity and security and projecting them externally;
- the main priority would be prosperity based on the restoration of competitiveness and growth, without which it was difficult to imagine achieving genuine solidarity, security or external influence;
- specific importance should be attached to the preservation and modernisation of the European social model;
- the major challenges were unemployment, the economic situation and insecurity;
- the Secretariat-General, in liaison with the Offices of the PRESIDENT and Ms WALLSTRÖM, would prepare a draft of the strategic objectives for the period from 2005 to 2009; following adoption on 26 January 2005 and presentation to Parliament by the PRESIDENT the same day, the draft would

be transmitted to Parliament and the Council with a view to the conclusion of an interinstitutional agreement;

- the Secretariat-General would at the same time prepare the work programme for 2005 which should reflect the agreed strategic objectives;
- the work programme should be presented to Parliament at the same time as the strategic objectives;
- the Secretariat-General would launch without delay the preparation of APS 2006 and the above guidelines would serve as a basis for the contributions of Directorates-General;
- the mid-term review of the Lisbon Strategy would be put before the Commission on 2 February 2005.

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

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The meeting closed at 1515 hours.