



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2006)1730 final

Brussels, 1 February 2006

MINUTES

of the 1730th meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 25 January 2006

(morning)

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PV(2006)1730 final

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Single sitting: Wednesday 25 January 2006 (morning)

The sitting opened at 0838 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	
Mr DIMAS	
Mr ALMUNIA	
Ms HÜBNER	
Mr BORG	
Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ	
Mr POTOČNIK	
Mr FIGEL'	
Mr KYPRIANOU	
Mr REHN	
Mr MICHEL	
Mr KOVÁCS	
Ms KROES	
Ms FISCHER BOEL	
Ms FERRERO-WALDNER	
Mr McCREEVY	
Mr ŠPIDLA	
Mr MANDELSON	
Mr PIEBALGS	

Items 17 (in part) and 18

The following also sat in

Mr VALE DE ALMEIDA	Chef de cabinet to the President	
Mr PETITE	Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr SØRENSEN	Director-General, Press and Communication DG	Items 17 (in part) and 18
Mr LAITENBERGER	Commission Spokesman	
Mr CABRAL	Adviser <i>hors classe</i> in the President's Office	
Mr TEMPEL	Chef de cabinet to Mr Verheugen	
Mr SZÜCS	Chef de cabinet to Mr Kovács	Item 18
Ms SCHREYER	Chef de cabinet to Mr Špidla	Items 1 to 17
Mr KESTERIS	Chef de cabinet to Mr Piebalgs	Items 1 and 17 (in part)
Mr SERVOZ	Secretariat-General	Item 17

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2006)1730/3; SEC(2006)72/2)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda and of the tentative agendas for forthcoming meetings.

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(SEC(2006)1730 and /2)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 23 January and Tuesday 24 January.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND SPECIAL MINUTES OF 1729th MEETING

(17 January)

(PV(2006) 1729; PV(2006)1729, Part II)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1729th meeting.

4. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNITY LAW

4.1. STATE AID - RECAPITULATIVE LIST

(SEC(2006)98; SEC(2006)96)

The Commission adopted the decisions in the recapitulative list (SEC(2006)98).

**4.2. INFRINGEMENTS - CASES POSTPONED BECAUSE OF
UNAVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS - REGULARISATION**

(SEC(2006)18)

The Commission adopted the decision in SEC(2006)18.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2006)73 et seq.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 16 and 20 January.

5.2. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2006)74 and /2)

The Commission took note of written procedures initiated for the adoption of decisions with political implications between 16 and 20 January, and of the “finalisation” written procedure initiated on 24 January.

5.3. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2006)75 et seq.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 16 and 20 January.

5.4. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation procedure between 16 and 20 January, as archived on the “Grefte 2000” (Registry) website.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2006)76/2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2006)11)

6.1. DG RELEX – APPOINTMENT OF AN A*14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2005)90 and /2; PERS(2005)173 to /3)

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director, Directorate A (CFSP and ESDP. Commission Coordination and Contribution) in the External Relations DG (PERS(2005)173).

The Commission took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 16 December 2005 and 12 January 2006 (PERS(2005)173/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. It also considered their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms FERRERO-WALDNER, it then decided to appoint Mr Stefano SANNINO to the post.

This decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

6.2. DG SANCO – ADOPTION OF A LIST FOR RECRUITMENT OF AN
A*15 EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN THE EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY
AUTHORITY
(PERS(2006)3 and /2)

The Commission noted the procedure followed in this matter, as set out in PERS(2006)11, and, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr KYPRIANOU, decided:

- to approve the list of three candidates set out in PERS(2006)11;
- to consider this list as the Commission proposal under Article 26 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002;

- to authorise Mr KYPRIANOU to communicate this decision to the Management Board of the European Food Safety Authority.

This decision would take effect immediately.

6.3. SG - APPLICATION OF ARTICLE 50 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS (SECOND STAGE) WITH RESPECT TO AN A*16 OFFICIAL (PERS(2006)10)

The Commission continued its discussions on this matter, begun on 21 December 2005 (PV(2005)1727).

The Commission, on a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, adopted the decision in PERS(2006)10 to apply the second stage of the procedure laid down in Article 50 of the Staff Regulations with respect to Mr François LAMOUREUX, an A*16 official, currently Adviser *hors classe* in the Secretariat-General.

This decision would take effect on 1 April.

6.4. DG ADMIN – TRANSITIONAL MEASURES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2006 EVALUATION EXERCISE FOR SENIOR OFFICIALS

On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission, to facilitate implementation of the 2006 evaluation exercise for senior officials, adopted the following transitional measures presented in item 4 of document PERS(2006)11:

- the 2005 evaluation of senior officials redeployed between DGs before 31 December 2005, in accordance with the decisions adopted by the Commission at its meeting of 9 November 2005 (PV(2005) 1721), as well as the evaluation of senior officials reporting directly to them before they were redeployed, would cover the period from 1 January 2005 until the day before the date of their redeployment and would be drawn up by the reporting officer on the day before the date of their redeployment.

This decision would take effect immediately.

- 7. THEMATIC PROGRAMMES FOR EXTERNAL ACTION UNDER THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE 2007-2013
(SEC(2006)92 and /2; SEC(2006)88)**
- 8. THEMATIC PROGRAMME FOR HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE 2007-13 – INVESTING IN PEOPLE
(COM(2006)18 to /4; SEC(2006)88)**
- 9. THEMATIC PROGRAMME UNDER THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE 2007-13 – NON-STATE ACTORS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN DEVELOPMENT
(COM(2006)19 to /3; SEC(2006)88)**
- 10. THEMATIC PROGRAMME UNDER THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE 2007-13 – ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES INCLUDING ENERGY
(COM(2006)20 to /4; SEC(2006)88)**
- 11. THEMATIC PROGRAMME UNDER THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE 2007-13 – ADVANCING THE FOOD SECURITY AGENDA TO ACHIEVE THE MDGs
(COM(2006)21 to /4; SEC(2006)88)**
- 12. THEMATIC PROGRAMME UNDER THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE 2007-13 – COOPERATION WITH THIRD COUNTRIES IN THE AREA OF MIGRATION AND ASYLUM
(COM(2006)26 to /4; SEC(2006)97; SEC(2006)88)**
- 13. THEMATIC PROGRAMME UNDER THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE 2007-13 – PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS WORLDWIDE
(COM(2006)23 to /3; SEC(2006)97; SEC(2006)88)**

**14. THEMATIC PROGRAMME UNDER THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE
2007-13 – COOPERATION WITH INDUSTRIALISED AND OTHER
HIGH-INCOME COUNTRIES
(COM(2006)25 to /3; SEC(2006)97; SEC(2006)88)**

The Commission:

- took note of the communication in SEC(2006)92/2;
- approved the communications set out in COM(2006)18/4, COM(2006)19/3, COM(2006)20/4, COM(2006)21/3 and /4, COM(2006)26/4, COM(2006)23/3 and COM(2006)25/3;
- decided to transmit all the communications approved to Parliament and the Council and to transmit the communication in COM(2006)19/3 also to the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

**15. COMMISSION PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL DECISION ON
INTEGRATED GUIDELINES FOR THE EMPLOYMENT POLICIES OF
THE MEMBER STATES
(COM(2006)32 and /2)**

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Council decision in COM(2006)32 and /2 for transmission to the Council and, for opinions, to Parliament, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions.

16. RELATIONS WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

**16.1. DOHA DEVELOPMENT AGENDA – STATE OF PLAY AFTER THE
HONG KONG MINISTERIAL MEETING
(SEC(2006)117; SEC(2006)90)**

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms FISCHER BOEL and Mr MANDELSON distributed as SEC(2006)117.

16.2. VISIT TO CHINA (12-17 JANUARY)

(SEC(2006)118 and /2)

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms REDING distributed as SEC(2006)118/2.

16.3. INTERNATIONAL PLEDGING CONFERENCE ON AVIAN INFLUENZA (BEIJING, 17-20 JANUARY) AND SITUATION IN TURKEY ON 23 JANUARY

(SEC(2006)121)

VISIT TO CHINA AND HONG KONG (17-20 JANUARY)

(SEC(2006)122)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr KYPRIANOU in SEC(2006)121 and SEC(2006)122.

**17. COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO THE SPRING EUROPEAN COUNCIL: TIME TO MOVE UP A GEAR – THE NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR GROWTH AND JOBS
(COM(2006)30 to /10; SEC(2006)91)**

The PRESIDENT and Mr VERHEUGEN presented the communication on the implementation of the renewed Lisbon Strategy to the Commission for approval. The PRESIDENT reminded the meeting of the courageous decision taken by the Commission in 2005 to make relaunching the economic reform process the key priority of its term of office. In the light of the work carried out since then and the results already achieved, he highlighted the validity of the chosen method of governance, based on a close partnership with the Member States for implementation of the strategy, the key aspects of which were a clear division of responsibilities, a common vision and a wide range of instruments for translating this vision into specific actions. It was now necessary, both for the Union and for the Member States, to move up a gear by delivering tangible results so that citizens could directly perceive the benefits of the reform process. The communication, which was accompanied by a detailed analysis of the national reform programmes

presented by the Member States (macro-, micro-economic and employment aspects), would be the Commission's main contribution to the spring European Council.

The PRESIDENT also drew attention to the importance of the role of the social partners in implementing the strategy and reminded the members that an extraordinary Social Summit would be held in 2006. As regards the priority action areas proposed in the communication, after a thorough examination of the national reform programmes the Commission would cooperate closely with the Council Presidency to ensure that these action areas were endorsed by the European Council and build the broadest possible political consensus with the Member States, thereby encouraging ownership of the strategy by citizens themselves.

Mr VERHEUGEN spoke of the real progress already made despite the short time that had passed since the relaunching of the strategy for growth and employment in 2005. He emphasised the key messages contained in the communication, viz. the Union's willingness and capacity to overcome the economic difficulties, and the effectiveness of the partnership method established under the renewed Lisbon Strategy. The governance cycle was working: all the Member States had presented their national programmes taking account of the integrated guidelines.

The Commission took note of the information supplied by the PRESIDENT and Mr VERHEUGEN. During an in-depth exchange of views on the communication, the Commission considered in particular the following aspects:

- the importance of not underestimating the extent of the reforms to be carried out at a time when there were encouraging signs of economic recovery, and of translating the commitments into specific measures;
- the effectiveness of the governance system established when the strategy for growth and employment was renewed in 2005;
- the urgent need to mobilise all the players in the Member States, in particular the social partners, who must be fully integrated in the process of economic reform if all the players were to benefit;

- the need for the Commission to take on a leadership role in promoting the social dimension of economic growth, with the emphasis on safeguarding the European social model while facilitating modernisation of the national systems;
- the need to integrate citizens' concerns more fully into the strategy, and the importance of showing people specific examples of successes that they could relate to;
- the Commission's collective responsibility and commitment in the important area of information and communication, particularly during the national debates to be held in the coming months;
- the need for the Commission to be a reliable and credible partner of the Member States, particularly in monitoring the implementation of their national reform programmes;
- the assessment of the cumulative effect of the national reform programmes combined with the impact of the measures taken under the Community Lisbon programme;
- the contribution to growth of areas such as education, research, technological development and innovation, as well as the contribution made by the rational use of the new information and communication technologies and the role that the future European institute of technology could be called on to play in this connection;
- the state of play of certain specific dossiers closely linked to the successful implementation of the Lisbon Strategy, such as the Community patent, services in the internal market and security of energy supply in the Union;
- the risks involved in the process, such as protectionist pressures versus the necessary opening of markets;
- the advisability of subsequently conducting an in-depth assessment of the strategy for growth and employment, given the short time that has elapsed since the renewal of the strategy in 2005.

Following the exchange of views, the Commission decided to amend, in item 2.2.1. on employment in the section on the national reform programmes in

COM(2006)30/8, the 4th and 5th sentences of the first bullet point as follows:
“Particular efforts are made or foreseen to improve the employment situation of women. Other measures are developed to help older workers, to support the integration of young and disadvantaged people into the labour market and to modernise social protection systems.”

Subject to this amendment, the Commission:

- approved the communication set out in COM(2006)30/8, COM(2006)30/9 and COM(2006)30/10, without prejudice to a finalisation (linguistic revision) of the German, English and French versions submitted to it;
- decided to transmit these documents to Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions;
- tasked Mr ALMUNIA and, particularly, the Statistical Office of the European Communities, with establishing as soon as possible and, at all events, in time for the spring European Council, the breakdown by gender of certain key social statistics contained in the communication.

The Commission thanked the Commission members, their offices and the departments involved for the excellent cooperation that had characterised preparation of the dossier, including in the “Lisbon Strategy” group of commissioners, and for the excellent quality of the text presented.

18. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

18.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Action to be taken on Parliament's opinions

(SP(2006)112)

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 requiring a single reading, as set out in SP(2006)112.

18.2. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL

(SI(2006)1)

ii) Council (Economic and Financial Affairs) on 24 January

Mr KOVÁCS reported on the Council meeting (Economic and Financial Affairs) held on 24 January to discuss reduced VAT rates. He reminded the meeting of the background of this matter and the measures that he had taken, and referred to the problems that this dossier was still causing in the Council. Mr KOVÁCS presented the main points of the overall compromise, outlined by the Council Presidency, on which consensus might be reached in the Council in the very short term, viz.: (1) the extension until the end of 2010 of the experimental reduced VAT rate system applied to labour-intensive services (Annex K); (2) the opening, until the end of March, of Annex K to the participation of the Member States who so wished; (3) the application of reduced VAT rates to the district heating network sector, under Article 12 of the 6th VAT Directive; (4) a request to the Commission to present, before 30 June 2007, a study on the impact of reduced VAT rates applied to labour-intensive services (including restaurants); the conclusions of this study should serve as a basis, if necessary, for new arrangements. Mr KOVÁCS outlined the reasons why it had not yet been possible to reach consensus on this compromise and confirmed that the Council had been informed that, if agreement was not reached at the end of the week, the Commission, as guardian of the treaties, would have to initiate infringement procedures against Member States which continued to apply the reduced rates in Annex K.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT hoped that the Council would reach agreement by the end of the current week, failing which the Commission would have to revisit this dossier.

iii) Informal meeting of Employment and Social Policy Ministers

(Villach, 20 January)

(SEC(2006)125)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr ŠPIDLA in SEC(2006)125.

18.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

iv) Part-session of 16 to 19 January
(SP(2006)188)

The Commission took note of the information provided about Parliament's part-session from 16 to 19 January in SP(2006)188.

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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 ended at 1017 hours.