EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

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Brussels, 19 July 2006

MINUTES

of the 1753rd meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 12 July 2006

(morning)

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Single sitting: Wednesday 12 July 2006 (morning)

The sitting opened at 09.07 with Mr BARROSO, President, in the chair. Items 15 and 16 were chaired by Ms WALLSTRÖM.

Present:

Mr BARROSO	President	Items 1 to 14
Ms WALLSTRÖM	Vice-President	
Mr VERHEUGEN	Vice-President	Items 1 to 14 (in part)
Mr BARROT	Vice-President	Items 1 to 14
Mr KALLAS	Vice-President	
Mr FRATTINI	Vice-President	Item 14 (in part)
Ms REDING		Items 1 to 14
Mr DIMAS		
Mr ALMUNIA		Items 1 to 14 (in part), 15 and 16
Ms HÜBNER		
Mr BORG		Items 1 to 14 (in part), 15 (in part) and 16
Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ		
Mr POTOČNIK		
Mr FIGEL’		
Mr KYPRIANOU		
Mr REHN		Items 1 to 14
Mr MICHEL		
Mr KOVÁCS		
Ms KROES		Items 1 to 14 (in part)
Ms FISCHER BOEL		
Ms FERRERO-WALDNER		Items 13 (in part) and 14
Mr McCREEVY		
Mr ŠPIDLA		
Mr MANDELSON		Items 1 to 15 (in part)
Mr PIEBALGS		Items 1 to 13 (in part)

The following also sat in

Mr VALE DE ALMEIDA	Chef de cabinet to the President	Items 1 to 14
Mr PETITE	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms CORUGEDO STENEBERG	Communication DG	
Mr LAITENBERGER	Commission Spokesman	Items 1 to 14
Ms CARVALHO	Acting Director-General, Bureau of European Policy Advisers (BEPA)	
Mr THEBAULT	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the President	Items 14 (in part) to 16
Mr ELLIS	Adviser in the President's Office	Items 1 to 14
Ms MARTÍNEZ ALBEROLA	A member of the President's staff	Items 14 (in part) to 16
Mr ANNERBERG	Chef de cabinet to Ms Wallström	Items 15 and 16
Ms ERLER	Chef de cabinet to Mr Verheugen	Items 14 (in part) and 15 (in part)
Mr SIGNORE	A member of Mr Frattini's staff	Items 1 to 14 (in part)
Mr STROHMEIER	Chef de cabinet to Ms Reding	Items 14 and 15 in part
Mr FRANCA	A member of Ms Reding's staff	Item 14 (in part)
Mr GIOTAKOS	A member of Mr Dimas's staff	Items 15 and 16
Mr THOMAS	Chef de cabinet to Mr Almunia	Item 14 (in part)
Mr TABONE	Chef de cabinet to Mr Borg	Items 14 (in part) and 15 (in part)
Ms SPANOU	A member of Mr Kyprianou's staff	Items 15 and 16
Ms BOIX ALONSO	A member of Ms Kroes's staff	Items 1 to 13
Mr CHILD	Chef de cabinet to Ms Ferrero-Waldner	Items 1 to 13 (in part)
Ms RASA	A member of Mr Piebalgs's staff	Items 13 (in part) to 16
Mr CERCONE	Communication DG	Items 15 and 16
Mr COLASANTI	Director-General, Information Society and Media DG	Item 14 (in part)

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

1. AGENDAS
(OJ(2006) 1753/3 ; SEC(2006)900/2)

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)1753)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 10 July 2006.

3. MINUTES OF 1752ND MEETING (4 JULY)
(PV(2006)1752 AND /2)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1752nd meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Action to be taken on Parliament's opinions
(SP(2006) 3184)

The Commission decided, for all dossiers for which empowerment was required, to empower the Members responsible for the areas concerned, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms WALLSTRÖM and any other Commission Members concerned, to adopt the amended proposals for transmission to Parliament and the Council (SP(2006) 3184).

4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL
(SI(2006) 643)

The Commission took note of the information supplied in SI(2006) 643 relating to the Council meetings held from Thursday 6 July to Wednesday 19 July.

ii) Informal meeting of Employment, Social Affairs and Health Ministers (Helsinki, 6 to 8 July 2006)
(SEC(2006)984) ; SI(2006) 649)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr ŠPIDLA in SEC(2006) 984.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

iii) July part-session
(SP(2006) 3058)

The Commission took note of the information supplied in SP(2006) 3058 relating to Parliament's part-session held in Strasbourg from 3 to 6 July .

5. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF COMMUNITY LAW

INFRINGEMENTS – CASES POSTPONED BECAUSE OF UNAVAILABILITY OF DOCUMENTS – REGULARISATION
(SEC(2006)921)

The Commission adopted the decisions in SEC(2006) 921.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2006) 901 et seq.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 3 and 7 July.

6.2. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2006) 902 and /2)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expires between 10 and 14 July and of the "finalisation" written procedures initiated following the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet on 10 July.

6.3. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2006) 903 et seq.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 3 and 7 July.

6.4. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation procedure between 3 and 7 July, as archived on the "Greffe 2000" (Registry) website.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2006) 904)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2006) 102)

DG BUDG – APPOINTMENT OF AD14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2006) 88 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, Budget Implementation Directorate in the Budget DG (PERS(2006) 88).

The Commission took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 2 and 15 June 2006 (PERS(2006) 88/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. It also considered the applicants' ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr KALLAS, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms GRYBAUSKAITĖ, it then decided to appoint Mr Ciaran SPILLANE to the vacant post.

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

8. COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION – FRAMEWORK FOR BUSINESS CONTINUITY MANAGEMENT IN THE COMMISSION
(SEC(2006) 898 TO /3 ; (SEC(2006) 899 AND /2 ; SEC(2006) 919)

The Commission:

– approved the communication from the PRESIDENT in agreement with Mr KALLAS in SEC(2006) 898/3 on a framework for business continuity management in the Commission ;

– noted that the above communication would be implemented by its departments according to staff working paper SEC(2006) 899/2 ;

– instructed the Secretariat-General to pursue and coordinate implementation of the above-mentioned framework ;

– instructed the Directors-General and Heads of Service to draw up an initial version of their plans for business continuity by the end of 2006 as regards central services (namely: the Secretariat-General ; the Legal Service ; the Directorate-General for Communication ; the Directorate-General for Personnel and Administration ; the Directorate-General for Informatics ; the Directorate-General for Budget ; the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics (Brussels) ; the Office for Administration and Payment of Individual Entitlements and the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics - Luxembourg) and by 31 March 2007 as regards other Directorates-General and Services ;

– invited Members to discuss progress on business continuity as part of their regular meetings with their Directors General and Heads of Service ;

– decided to review, in a year's time, progress made and identify areas for improvement.

9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK – ANNUAL STATEMENT ON THE EURO AREA

(COM(2006) 392 TO /4 ; (SEC(2006) 936 AND /2 ; SEC(2006) 937)

The Commission approved the communication in COM(2005) 392/4 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Central Bank, together

with the 2006 annual statement on the euro area in staff paper SEC(2006) 936/2, the contents of which were noted.

10. COMMISSION COMMUNICATION TO PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – A THEMATIC STRATEGY ON THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF PESTICIDES
(COM(2006) 372 AND /2 ; (SEC(2006) 895 AND /2 ; SEC(2006) 905 ; SEC(2006) 934)

11. PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL DIRECTIVE ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ACTION TO ACHIEVE A SUSTAINABLE USE OF PESTICIDES
(COM(2006) 373 TO /3 ; SEC(2006) 894 ; SEC(2006) 914 ; SEC(2006) 905 ; SEC(2006) 934)

The Commission

– approved the communication in COM(2005) 372/2 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, together with the technical annex in staff working paper SEC(2006) 895/2, the contents of which were noted ;

– adopted the proposal for a directive in COM(2005) 373/3 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, together with the impact assessment and its summary in staff papers SEC(2006) 894 and SEC(2006) 914 respectively, the contents of which were noted.

12. TRENDS IN THE MEMBER STATES
(SEC(2006) 967)

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms WALLSTRÖM in SEC(2006) 967.

13. COMMISSION DECISION FIXING THE FINAL AMOUNT OF THE PENALTY PAYMENT IMPOSED ON MICROSOFT CORPORATION BY DECISION C(2005) 4420 FINAL AND AMENDING THE DECISION ON THE AMOUNT OF THE DAILY PENALTY PAYMENT *(CASE COMP/C-3/37.792-MICROSOFT)*
(C(2006) 3143 TO /7 ; SEC(2006) 935 ; SEC(2006) 979)

Ms KROES introduced the draft Decision she was tabling for adoption. The Decision by which she proposed to impose a penalty payment on Microsoft was justified by the latter's failure to fulfil its obligation to provide work group servers operating system vendors with specific information relating to interoperability to enable them to develop and distribute such products. The Decision was needed to restore competition in the market segments concerned and to give a clear and strong signal to markets as regards the Commission's determination to penalise any infringements of the Treaty's competition rules.

Ms KROES outlined the background to this case. In particular, she recalled the Commission Decision of March 2004, which noted that Microsoft, abusing its virtually monopolistic position, had infringed Article 82 of the Treaty, and which required the firm to divulge information relating to interoperability. In December 2004 the Court of First Instance had refused Microsoft's request to suspend the effect of the Commission's Decision of March 2004 while awaiting the outcome of its appeal before the Court of Justice. To this date, more than a year and a half after the Commission's Decision, the firm had not divulged all the required information, in spite of several letters of formal notice from the Commission.

Ms KROES explained that the proposal for a Decision that she was tabling that day was based on the opinions of the trustee and external experts. The Commission had informed Microsoft in November 2005 that as of 16 December 2005 any failure to fulfil its obligations would be penalised by a daily penalty payment of €2 million. The final daily penalty payment was €1.5 million and the total amount, for the period 16 December 2005 to 20 June 2006, was €280.5 million. Ms KROES also pointed out that, if the firm did not fulfil its obligations before the 31 July, the daily penalty payment would be increased to €3 million.

Lastly, she noted Microsoft's desire to cooperate with the Commission, but stressed that proof was still needed that the firm was fulfilling all its obligations.

The PRESIDENT thanked Ms KROES and her departments for preparing the dossier. He stressed the importance of the Decision, where failure by the firm concerned to fulfil obligations represented a serious infringement of the Treaty's competition rules. He also noted the Commission's unanimous support for the proposed decision.

Following this presentation, the Commission:

– took note of the opinion of the Advisory Committee on Restrictive Practices and Dominant Positions of 3 and 10 July in C(2006) 3143/3 and /6 ;

– took note of the final report of the Hearing Officer of 3 July in C(2006) 3143/4 ;

– adopted, in the authentic language (English), the Decision in C(2006) 3143/7, fixing the final total amount of the penalty payment imposed on the firm concerned at €280.5 million, for the period between 16 December 2005 and 20 June 2006, under Article 24(2) of Regulation (EC) 1/2003 and modifying Commission Decision C(2005) 4420 final of 10 November 2005 imposing a penalty payment on the firm concerned in accordance with Article 24(1) of Regulation (EC) 1/2003, and, in the case of a failure by the firm to fulfil its obligations under Article 5(a) and (c) of Commission Decision C(2004) 900 final of 24 March 2004 before 31 July 2006, increasing the daily penalty

payment imposed under Article 24(2) of Regulation (EC) 1/2003 to €3 million, to be applicable from 31 July 2006 ;

– decided that the decision in C(2006) 3143/7 would be notified to the company concerned, together with the final report of the Hearing Officer ;

– decided that the most important parts of the decision, together with the opinions of the Advisory Committee and the final report of the Hearing Officer, would be published in the official languages in the Official Journal (with business secrets removed) ;

– decided to publish the decision (with business secrets removed) on the Internet.

14. PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL REGULATION ON ROAMING ON PUBLIC MOBILE NETWORKS WITHIN THE COMMUNITY AND AMENDING DIRECTIVE 2002/21/EC ON A COMMON REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS NETWORKS AND SERVICES

(COM(2006) 382 TO /4 ; SEC(2006) 925 ; SEC(2006) 926 AND /2 ; SEC(2006) 933)

Ms REDING presented the proposal she was tabling for adoption. Firstly, she described the particularly atypical nature of the situation which had prompted the Commission to take action: costs to consumers bore no relation to real costs and national regulators were unable to intervene, given roaming's cross-border nature. She described the background to this proposal, the need for which had been apparent for several years and for which the expectations of the European Parliament and the national regulators and, of course, consumers were high. In spite of repeated warnings the situation had not evolved favourably, as regards neither transparency in relation to charges applied nor the level of charges themselves, and it seemed that introducing a regulation was now the only course of action likely to produce results.

Ms REDING then outlined the main aspects of the proposal: the obligation on operators to demonstrate transparency, the fixing of ceilings for wholesale and retail prices based on operating costs in an attempt to have a real effect on reducing prices for consumers, and the limitation on profits for operators from roaming calls.

Following comments made during preparatory work, Ms REDING pointed out that regulation of wholesale prices would apply immediately following Parliament and Council agreement on this proposal, while regulation regarding retail prices would take effect only six months later, in order to give the sector concerned a second chance to adapt to the new requirements.

She concluded by pointing out that this proposal was in line with the Commission's wish to promote a Europe of real results.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that the proposal was awaited by Parliament, by the public and by businesses, that the March European Council had expressed a wish for it and that it was a specific example of a "Europe of results". The proposal was also important as regards the Lisbon Strategy, particularly in relation to obstacles to competition which meant excessive costs for businesses when it came to roaming. He recalled that there had been general agreement, including from national regulators, on the need to act Europe-wide in order to address the market anomaly represented by the present situation.

The PRESIDENT thanked Ms REDING and her departments for their work and all Chefs de cabinet for their help in drawing up a solution in two stages, with two different dates of entry into force, according to whether the regulation concerned wholesale or retail prices. This two-stage approach was a particularly good example of the principle of better regulation. He concluded by underlining the importance of the entire Commission's support for Ms REDING's proposal.

The debate which followed included the following:

– thanks to Ms REDING for her very constructive cooperation and for taking into account the many concerns expressed during the drawing-up of the proposal ;

– some regrets as regards the preparatory work, in particular the tardy availability of the final revised version of the proposal, and a wish to have a policy debate in advance more often ;

– broad agreement as regards the need to act quickly to solve an anomaly on a market which was not yet complete ;

– general support for the two-stage approach, which gave the mobile telephone sector a second chance to adapt, while guaranteeing a decrease in prices for consumers, although this support was accompanied by some questions regarding implementation of the second phase – automatic or subject to advance evaluation ;

– the advisability of prolonging the period between the entry into force of the two regulations, which the proposal sets at 6 months ; on this issue, some stakeholders expressed their preference for the withdraw of the proposal in case of a substantial price decrease before the adoption of the regulation ;

– questions regarding the consequences of action on retail prices, particularly in terms of maintaining competition and adapting to growth in demand following a decrease in charges – the marked asymmetry of markets in the "old" and "new" Member States was particularly emphasised in this context and the possibility of a report on the consequences was raised ;

– great satisfaction as regards the transparency obligation on operators, which would allow consumers to make an informed choice, and the limit on charges for roaming calls received ;

– the fact that the action proposed still allowed for innovative solutions and varied charges, on the one hand, and comfortable profits for operators, on the other ;

– the need to take into account the specific case of the outermost regions, where communication charges are higher ;

– the prospect of rapid change on the market due to competition and technological developments ;

– the unparalleled success of the mobile telephone sector in Europe and the advisability of a strong regulatory framework which would be beneficial to economic activity ;

– the link between this proposal and achieving the internal market, the cross-border nature of the issue and, therefore, the legitimacy of Commission action in this respect ;

– the advisability of also looking as the SMS and MMS situation ;

– the political usefulness of the dossier, which is a good example of the added value of the European dimension and of this Commission's achievements in the context of the "Citizens" agenda" presented on 10 May.

In the context of the debate on the arrangements for entry into force of the regulation on retail prices, the question was whether it would not be advisable to first regulate wholesale prices and then leave a period of time for operators to comply with the conditions fixed by the Commission, before applying the retail price regulation in cases where the conditions were not fulfilled. The Director-General of the Legal Service confirmed that the option of passing automatically into the second phase was the only one which offered sufficient legal certainty, while a conditional transition requiring examination of prices charged seemed extremely complex.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that consumer associations and national regulators supported action on two levels, i.e. wholesale and retail. Wishing to take account of doubts expressed regarding regulation of retail prices and to emphasise the exceptional and specific nature of action on prices, while taking more account of the specificity of the outermost regions, he suggested modifying the proposal for a regulation as follows:

– in the second sentence of recital 27, add the text underlined: "*They should also monitor developments in the pricing of voice and data services for mobile customers when roaming within the Community, in particular as regards the specific costs related to roaming calls made in the outermost regions of the Community and the necessity to ensure that these costs can be adequately recovered on the wholesale market." ;*

– in the second sentence of Article 12, add the text underlined: *"In its report the Commission shall include its reasoning regarding the continued need for regulation or the possibility of its repeal, in the light of developments in the market and with regard to competition."*

Subject to these amendments, the Commission adopted the proposal for a directive in COM(2005) 382/4 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, together with the impact assessment and its summary in staff papers SEC(2006) 925 and SEC(2006) 926 respectively, the contents of which were noted.

The Commission also took note of the opinion given by the Legal Service during the preparatory work, according to which roaming services regulated at Community level should not be considered to be similar services, within the meaning of the provisions of the GATS agreement, to roaming services offered by non-Community operators.

15. PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND COUNCIL REGULATION CONCERNING THE PLACING OF PLANT PROTECTION PRODUCTS ON THE MARKET
(COM(2006) 388 TO /4 ; SEC(2006) 931 TO /11 ; SEC(2006) 930 ; SEC(2006) 934)

During a brief discussion of the proposal for a Regulation presented by Mr KYPRIANOU in COM(2006) 388/4, the Commission examined the exact nature

of the link between the obligatory integrated pest management system, on the one hand, and cross-compliance established in the framework of direct support for farmers, on the other.

Following this examination, the Commission decided to amend recital 28 of the proposal for a Regulation as follows:

"*In order to ensure a high level of protection of human health and the environment, plant protection products should be used properly having regard to the principles of integrated pest management. The Council shall include in the statutory management requirement referred to in Annex III of Regulation (EC) No 1782/2003 the principles of integrated pest management, including good plant protection practice and good environmental practice. A transitional period should therefore be foreseen to allow Member States to put in place the necessary structures to enable users of plant protection products to apply the principles of integrated pest management.*"

Subject to this amendment, the Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2005) 388/4 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, together with the impact assessment and its summary in staff papers SEC(2006)931 to /11 and SEC(2006) 30 respectively, the contents of which were noted.

16. OTHER BUSINESS

16.1. FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SIGNING OF THE TREATY OF ROME (25 MARCH 1957 – 25 MARCH 2007)
(SEC(2006)944 and /2 ; SEC(2006) 948)

Ms WALLSTRÖM briefly presented her information note in SEC(2006) 944/2. Firstly, she pointed out that the celebrations would involve both the Commission and the other Community institutions, and the Member

States and civil society players. In this regard, she stressed the major role to be played by Commission Representations in the Member States in supporting efforts agreed at national level.

She then mentioned the work carried out by Directorate-General Communication in close cooperation with other Commission departments and in coordination with the other institutions in an interinstitutional group. She asked the Commission Members for their continued support and that of the departments for which they are responsible.

As regards the messages to be transmitted, Ms WALLSTRÖM stressed that the different initiatives should be carefully chosen and targeted, that they should be as effective as possible and that they should be altogether forward-looking. In particular, she mentioned the idea of creating a logo and a political slogan which could be the common trademark of action taken by the different institutions.

Lastly, she said that she intended to present the Commission with a communication on this subject next autumn.

The Commission took note of this information and of Ms WALLSTRÖM's briefing note in SEC(2006) 944/2.

16.2. PARTICIPATION AT THE HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS' ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (GENEVA, 3 TO 5 JULY)
(SEC(2006) 978)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr ŠPIDLA in SEC(2006) 978.

16.3. COMMUNITY STRATEGIC GUIDELINES 2007-2013 – A COHESION POLICY IN SUPPORT OF GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT

Ms HÜBNER presented the proposal for a Council decision she was tabling jointly with Mr ŠPIDLA, and which should be adopted by "finalisation" written procedure on Thursday 13 July (E/1340/2006).

She said that adoption of the Council Regulation laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund, and the negotiations in Parliament and the Council on this proposal for a Decision could mean having to amend the annex to this proposal. In order to provide for this possibility, she and Mr ŠPIDLA were asking for empowerment.

She described the events leading up to the proposal, namely the December 2005 agreement on the financial perspective 2007-13 and the adoption at second reading of the five Regulations on cohesion policy by Parliament on 4 July and by the Council (Economic and Financial Affairs) on 11 July. The proposal on the strategic guidelines therefore represented the third stage. These guidelines, which fall within the Lisbon agenda, would allow Member States to establish their strategic frameworks and their operational programmes for 2007-13. The aim was to encourage Member States to focus investment on a limited number of priorities: the attractiveness of the regions ; innovation, initiative and knowledge ; creating better jobs. She thought these guidelines would be fully implemented by the beginning of 2007.

The Commission took note of this information. Subject to the approval of the proposal for a Council decision by "finalisation" written procedure, the Commission decided to empower Ms HÜBNER and Mr ŠPIDLA, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, to subsequently amend the annex to the proposal for a Council decision as much as necessary, following the adoption of the Council regulation laying down general provisions on the European

Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund.

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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 13.31.