



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2010)1908 final

Brussels, 24 March 2010

MINUTES
of the 1908th meeting of the Commission
held in Strasbourg
(Winston Churchill building)
on Tuesday 9 March 2010
(afternoon)

PV(2010)1908 final

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Attendance list	5-7
1. AGENDAS (OJ(2010)1908/4; SEC(2010)231/2).....	8
2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET (SEC(2010)1908)	8
3. MINUTES OF 1907 TH MEETING (3 MARCH) (PV(2010)1907).....	8
4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS (SEC(2010)240).....	8
4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS	9
4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL	10
4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT	11
5. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF EUROPEAN UNION LAW	12
STATE AID – INDIVIDUAL CASES (SEC(2010)247/2).....	12
6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS.....	12
6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2010)233 ET SEQ.).....	12
6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2010)234 ET SEQ.)	12
6.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2010)235 ET SEQ.).....	12
6.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2010)236)	13
7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2010)232)	13
7.1. BUREAU OF EUROPEAN POLICY ADVISERS – REVIEW OF TASKS, AMENDMENT OF ORGANISATION CHART AND CREATION OF A CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER POST (SEC(2010)258; SEC(2010)259).....	13
7.2. DG HUMAN RESOURCES – PROMOTION OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS – 2009 EXERCISE.....	14

8. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL LAYING DOWN THE RULES AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES CONCERNING MECHANISMS FOR CONTROL BY MEMBER STATES OF THE COMMISSION'S EXERCISE OF IMPLEMENTING POWERS (COM(2010)83 TO /3; SEC(2010)249).....	14
9. PROPOSAL FOR A DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING A EUROPEAN UNION ACTION FOR THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL (COM(2010)76 TO /3; SEC(2010)197; SEC(2010)198; SEC(2010)199; SEC(2010)200).....	15
10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS - INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY POST-COPENHAGEN: ACTING NOW TO REINVIGORATE GLOBAL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (COM(2010)86 TO /4; SEC(2010)261; SEC(2010)262).....	15
11. RELATIONS WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES.....	16
11.1. FIFTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (NEW YORK, 1-12 MARCH) (SEC(2010)275)	16
11.2. VISIT TO ASIA (VIETNAM, SINGAPORE AND INDIA, 1-4 MARCH) (SEC(2010)274).....	16
11.3. CONCLUSION OF THE TECHNICAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND COLOMBIA AND PERU (SEC(2010)278).....	16
11.4. VISIT TO HAITI AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (PORT-AU-PRINCE AND SANTO DOMINGO, 28 FEBRUARY - 3 MARCH) (SEC(2010)279)	16

12. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL – FOLLOW-UP TO THE COUNCIL DECISION OF 16 FEBRUARY 2010 GIVING NOTICE TO GREECE TO TAKE MEASURES FOR THE DEFICIT REDUCTION JUDGED NECESSARY IN ORDER TO REMEDY THE SITUATION OF EXCESSIVE DEFICIT (COM(2010)91).....	17
13. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON THE RIGHT TO INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS (COM(2010)82 TO /3; SEC(2010)252)	25
14. OTHER BUSINESS.....	26
14.1. RESULTS OF COUNCIL MEETING (EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS) (BRUSSELS, 8 AND 9 MARCH)	26
14.2. VISIT TO FRANCE AND PORTUGAL FOLLOWING THE SEVERE WEATHER IN CERTAIN REGIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN FEBRUARY (POITOU- CHARENTES, 3 AND 4 MARCH, AND MADEIRA, 6 AND 7 MARCH) (SEC(2010)281).....	26

Single sitting: Tuesday 9 March 2010 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.21 with Mr BARROSO, President, in the chair. Items 13 and 14 were chaired by Ms REDING.

Present:

Mr BARROSO	President	Points 1 à 12
Baroness ASHTON	High Representative/Vice-President	
Ms REDING	Vice-President	
Mr ALMUNIA	Vice-President	
Mr KALLAS	Vice-President	
Ms KROES	Vice-President	Points 1 to 14 (in part)
Mr TAJANI	Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Mr POTOČNIK		
Mr REHN		
Mr PIEBALGS		
Mr BARNIER		
Ms VASSILIOU		
Mr ŠEMETA		
Mr DE GUCHT		Items 1 to 12
Mr DALLI		
Ms GEOGHEGAN-QUINN		
Mr LEWANDOWSKI		
Ms DAMANAKI		
Mr OETTINGER		
Mr HAHN		
Ms HEDEGAARD		
Mr FÜLE		
Mr ANDOR		
Ms MALMSTRÖM		
Mr CIOLOŞ		

Absent:

Ms GEORGIEVA

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

Ms HRISTCHEVA	A member of Ms GEORGIEVA's staff
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The following also sat in:

Mr LAITENBERGER	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr CARVOUNIS	Deputy Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr DOENS	Head of the Commission Spokesperson Service	
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Commission Spokeswoman	
Mr SCHINAS	Bureau of European Policy Advisers	
Mr CABRAL	Adviser hors classe in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 12
Mr KLAUS	A member of the PRESIDENT's staff	Items 1 to 12
Mr PESONEN	Chef de cabinet to Mr REHN	Items 1 to 12

Secretary: Ms DAY, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms BALASINSKA, administrator in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2010)1908/4; SEC(2010)231/2)

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(2010)1908)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 8 March.

3. MINUTES OF 1907TH MEETING (3 MARCH)

(PV(2010)1907)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1907th meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(SEC(2010)240)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group held on Friday 5 March (SEC(2010)240).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Appointment of Commission Members to the interinstitutional working group on regulatory agencies

(point 1.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission decided to appoint Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, Mr LEWANDOWSKI and Mr ŠEMETA as its representatives at political level on the interinstitutional working group on regulatory agencies, following the line set out in SI(2010)60.

ii) Ordinary legislative procedure

(point 1.2.1 of the IRG record)

- Framework for the deployment of Intelligent Transport Systems (Directive) – JENSEN report – 2008/0263 (COD) – Preparation for a negotiated Council position at first reading

The Commission authorised Mr KALLAS to pursue contacts with Parliament and the Council in order to facilitate agreement on a Council position at first reading following the line set out in SPI(2010)11.

iii) Special legislative procedure

(point 1.3 of the IRG record)

- Amendment of Directive 2006/112/EC on the common system of value added tax as regards the rules on invoicing (Council Directive) – CASA report – 2009/0009 (CNS) – Possibility of a general policy line for the Council (Economic and Financial Affairs) on 16 March.

The Commission authorised Mr ŠEMETA to speak at the Council meeting (Economic and Financial Affairs) on 16 March, following the line set out in SI(2010)62/2.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL

iv) Programming of Council business

(SI(2010)63)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2010)63 on the Council meetings between Thursday 11 and Wednesday 24 March.

v) Development of the second-generation Schengen Information System (SIS II)

(SEC(2010)277)

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms MALMSTRÖM in SEC(2010)277.

vi) Preparation for Council meeting (Environment) (Brussels, 15 March)

(point 2.2 of the IRG record)

- European Union participation in the negotiation of a legally binding instrument on mercury

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2010)64.

- European Union participation in the negotiations on the revision of the Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution to Abate Acidification, Eutrophication and Ground-level Ozone (the Gothenburg Protocol)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2010)65.

- Position to be adopted on behalf of the European Union at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) (Doha, 13-25 March)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2010)66/2.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

vii) Preparation for Parliament's March I part-session – Oral questions

(point 3.4 of the IRG record)

H-0058/10, H-0059/10, H-0061/10, H-0063/10, H-0064/10, H-0067/10, H-0068/10, H-0071/10, H-0072/10, H-0074/10, H-0076/10, H-0077/10, (joined with H-0091/10), H-0079/10, H-0081/10, H-0082/10, H-0084/10, H-0085/10, H-0087/10, H-0088/10, H-0089/10, H-0090/10, H-0094/10, H-0095/10, H-0098/10, H-0100/10, H-0101/10, H-0103/10, H-0107/10, H-0109/10 and H-0110/10

The Commission approved the draft answers in SP(2010)1002 to /4, following the agreement reached between the Chefs de cabinet on certain draft supplementary answers, set out in SP(2010)1002/5.

viii) Action taken on non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its January part-session

(point 3.7.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SP(2010)1082/2 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its January part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

ix) Participation by Members of the European Parliament in international conferences

(point 3.8 of the IRG record)

- Thirteenth session of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations (Geneva, 1 to 26 March)

The Commission decided to agree to the request to the PRESIDENT from Mr Jerzy Buzek, President of Parliament, concerning the attendance of four Members of the European Parliament at the above-mentioned conference from 14 to 16 March, with a reminder about the procedure to be followed.

5. MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF EUROPEAN UNION LAW

STATE AID – INDIVIDUAL CASES

(SEC(2010)247/2)

The Commission adopted the decisions in SEC(2010)247/2.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2010)233 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 1 and 5 March.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2010)234 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 1 and 5 March.

6.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2010)235 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 1 and 5 March, as archived in e-Greffe.

6.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2010)236)

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 8 and 12 March.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2010)232)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2010)19)

7.1. BUREAU OF EUROPEAN POLICY ADVISERS – REVIEW OF TASKS, AMENDMENT OF ORGANISATION CHART AND CREATION OF A CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISER POST

(SEC(2010)258; SEC(2010)259)

The Commission, on a proposal from Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided:

- to take note of the review of the tasks of the Bureau of European Policy Advisers as set out in SEC(2010)258;
- to endorse the new organisation chart of the Bureau of European Policy Advisers as set out in SEC(2010)259;
- to endorse the creation of an AD15 post of chief scientific adviser, reporting direct to the PRESIDENT, for the duration of the present Commission's term of office, at the end of which the post would be abolished.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.2. DG HUMAN RESOURCES – PROMOTION OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT OFFICIALS – 2009 EXERCISE**

The Commission noted the procedure followed, as set out at point 2 of PERS(2010)19, and, on a proposal from Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided:

- to promote to grade AD16 Mr Peter BALAS, Ms Lowri EVANS, Mr Fokion FOTIADIS, Ms Martine REICHERTS, Mr João VALE DE ALMEIDA and Mr David WRIGHT, with effect from 1 January 2010;
- to promote to grade AD15 Mr Peter BASCH, Ms Marianne KLINGBEIL and Mr Ian WALTON-GEORGE, with effect from 1 January 2010.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**8. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
AND OF THE COUNCIL LAYING DOWN THE RULES AND GENERAL
PRINCIPLES CONCERNING MECHANISMS FOR CONTROL BY
MEMBER STATES OF THE COMMISSION'S EXERCISE OF
IMPLEMENTING POWERS
(COM(2010)83 TO /3; SEC(2010)249)**

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Regulation set out in COM(2010)83/3 for transmission to the European Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the national parliaments.

9. PROPOSAL FOR A DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ESTABLISHING A EUROPEAN UNION ACTION FOR THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE LABEL

(COM(2010)76 TO /3; SEC(2010)197; SEC(2010)198; SEC(2010)199; SEC(2010)200)

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Decision in COM(2010)76 and /3 for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and to the national parliaments, accompanied by the impact assessment and the summary thereof in staff papers SEC(2010)197 and SEC(2010)198, the contents of which were noted.

It also took note of the opinion of the Impact Assessment Board on the above proposal for a Decision, as set out in SEC(2010)199.

10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS - INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY POST-COPENHAGEN: ACTING NOW TO REINVIGORATE GLOBAL ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (COM(2010)86 TO /4; SEC(2010)261; SEC(2010)262)

The Commission approved the communication in COM(2010)86/4 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and, for information, to the national parliaments, together with the staff paper distributed as SEC(2010)261, the contents of which were noted.

11. RELATIONS WITH NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

11.1. FIFTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (NEW YORK, 1-12 MARCH) (SEC(2010)275)

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms REDING in SEC(2010)275.

11.2. VISIT TO ASIA (VIETNAM, SINGAPORE AND INDIA, 1-4 MARCH) (SEC(2010)274)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr DE GUCHT in SEC(2010)274.

11.3. CONCLUSION OF THE TECHNICAL NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FREE TRADE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND COLOMBIA AND PERU (SEC(2010)278)

The Commission took note of the information note from Mr DE GUCHT in SEC(2010)278.

11.4. VISIT TO HAITI AND THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC (PORT-AU- PRINCE AND SANTO DOMINGO, 28 FEBRUARY - 3 MARCH) (SEC(2010)279)

The Commission took note of the information note from Ms GEORGIEVA in SEC(2010)279.

**12. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL –
FOLLOW-UP TO THE COUNCIL DECISION OF 16 FEBRUARY 2010
GIVING NOTICE TO GREECE TO TAKE MEASURES FOR THE DEFICIT
REDUCTION JUDGED NECESSARY IN ORDER TO REMEDY THE
SITUATION OF EXCESSIVE DEFICIT
(COM(2010)91)**

Mr REHN presented the communication he was tabling for the Commission's approval, which assessed the decisions taken by the Greek Government to meet the budgetary target for 2010 set out in the Council Decision of 16 February under Article 126(9) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. He began by stressing that Greece was on the right track and he welcomed the timetable proposed by the Greek Government to implement the budget objectives for 2010, including the necessary additional measures, and the commitment by Greece to achieve a reduction of four GDP points in its government deficit in 2010.

He explained that the communication took on board the report submitted by Greece on 8 March on the implementation of its stability and growth programme and on additional measures. Monitoring of the measures was continuing and the Commission would carry out an evaluation in the months ahead on the medium-term budget prospects in Greece for 2011-2012 and on certain structural reforms that would have to begin, particularly in pensions and health care.

He noted that the decisions taken by the Greek authorities had had the initial positive effect of calming the financial markets and reducing the interest rate spread on bonds. This was also a clear sign that, in line with the conclusions of the February European Council, the euro zone countries were prepared to safeguard the stability of the euro zone where necessary.

In this context it was important for the euro zone countries to adopt a coordinated approach, together with conditions when intervention was necessary. Mr REHN also referred to the preparatory work carried out in the Eurogroup, which had been given a mandate to prepare various technical solutions to be presented at the next meeting.

He then turned to what he considered to be a question for the longer term, namely the possible creation of a 'European monetary fund'. He described the background to this recently launched debate and noted that a number of different views had been expressed on this issue both within Member State governments and by certain European and international financial institutions.

He stressed that the Commission was prepared to work closely with the Eurogroup and with the euro zone countries and to propose a European framework for coordinating any financial aid that might be envisaged in this context. At the same time the Commission was working to improve economic coordination and the country surveillance mechanisms.

Mr REHN concluded by saying that at this stage the only valid option that might achieve practical results was to work with the Eurogroup and with the euro zone member countries.

Mr BARNIER took the floor at this point to raise the issue of credit default swaps (CDS). His department had held a meeting with regulators and investors on Friday 5 March to discuss the CDS market and the scope for regulating financial products. The meeting had also been attended by staff from the departments of Mr REHN and Mr ALMUNIA.

Mr BARNIER introduced CDS, which are a type of derivative, and more specifically an insurance policy for lenders. In the context of the Greek crisis, the question of the role of CDS, and in particular sovereign CDS – relating to sovereign debt – had become especially acute. Certain transactions, in particular by hedge funds, on the markets for CDS on Greek debt, had been accused of exacerbating the crisis.

He took the view that the Greek market had specific features which called for a certain degree of caution concerning the responsibility for the Greek crisis of operators on the CDS markets. It was an illiquid market which accounted for some 10% of the market for European CDS and which were in the hands of a small number of operators, especially banks. The transactions took place as bilateral

negotiations, over-the-counter (OTC), and not on organised markets such as traditional stock exchanges. Moreover, the state of Greek public finances explained, at least in part, the current tensions.

He was concerned by the absence of clearing for these products in Europe and of a body for recording the transactions, which meant that it was impossible to have a clear view of the state of the market, and by the fact that European regulators had, at best, only indirect access to information, which remained very patchy. The best information available was based on the data collected in the United States by the American clearing house which, because of certain data-protection problems, had so far refused to send the data to a number of European regulators.

He then outlined the Commission's possible responses and noted that he had established with Mr REHN and Mr ALMUNIA the need for the Members of the Commission concerned to closely coordinate their action over time with regard to all these financial questions.

He wanted the system to be proposed to bring a clear improvement to the situation, in particular to the information available on these very opaque markets and on the practices that were developed there. He had asked his department to contact Mr REHN's and Mr ALMUNIA's departments in order to examine how best to exploit the possible synergies between them.

He concluded by setting out the two types of possible response at this stage for dealing with a crisis that had revealed the opaque operation of the markets concerned and the resistance of certain operators to greater transparency.

The first was a long-term structural response involving more transparent regulation of the derivatives market, including price transparency, with standardisation of products, the setting up of clearing houses and trade repositories in Europe, and the effective cover of market abuses of OTC derivatives, with a view to achieving genuine traceability of the products in question. He had asked his department to speed up the work already under way on the draft Regulation on clearing of derivatives and trade repositories, which he would table within the next few months

and which would have to deal with all these questions. Given the many different objections that would be raised, the Commission had to be absolutely determined to strengthen its armoury, enabling it to react to this type of situation.

The second was a possible short-term response to the specific question of sovereign CDS. The European Parliament would this week debate the Längen Report, which made explicit reference to the need to prohibit certain potentially dangerous derivatives on a case-by-case basis; the Commission had to take a position on these questions very quickly.

At this stage, an outright ban on short selling was not desirable, either for derivatives or for other financial products, because short selling allowed risk to be covered and, to a certain degree, liquidity to be provided to the markets. However, the situation was different for short selling that was purely speculative, in particular short selling of financial products by market operators who had neither borrowed the instruments nor had any guarantee of obtaining them.

In the latter case, known as naked short selling, the Commission would have to think about the possibility of European supervisory authorities prohibiting, and penalising in a coordinated fashion, abusive short-selling practices that did not involve any risk cover but were mere speculative instruments, in particular in the context of market manipulation or during a crisis.

Lastly, he also took the view that the situation was different for purely speculative short selling of sovereign CDS, i.e. speculation against countries and their currencies, in this case the euro and, consequently, in limited cases, he would like the Commission to examine whether an outright ban on naked short selling of sovereign debt was appropriate.

He thought that the natural legislative route for addressing these questions was an amendment to the Market Abuse Directive, which was planned for the autumn. However, he had asked his department as a matter of urgency to look at the possibility of proceeding more quickly on this question, either by bringing forward

the amendment to before the summer, or by proposing a specific legislative measure on short selling, including short selling of CDS.

The Commission then held a discussion in which the following aspects were highlighted:

- the positive nature of the measures taken by the Greek authorities, which had been endorsed by all the Greek political forces, and the possibility of the Eurogroup and the Commission's supporting them;
- the need for Greece to undertake real structural reforms spanning several years in order to spread the burden of the necessary adjustments and reforms fairly and transparently;
- the importance for the Commission of working closely with the Eurogroup, the Member States and the European Central Bank in order to seek and assess the best technical solutions for providing financial support to the Member States in need of such aid;
- the sensitive nature of the proposed "European monetary fund" and the complexity of the questions raised by the creation of such a fund; the need for the Commission to conduct a debate in the longer term on what such a fund would cover, on the institutional and legal implications vis-à-vis the current treaties, and on relations with the International Monetary Fund, and to ensure adequate communication on this subject, while stressing the Commission's ability to keep ahead of events in both the short and longer term;
- the need to achieve a consensus at European level on working methods and to avoid these issues being publicly tackled prematurely, superficially and incorrectly;
- the case for holding a debate very soon on the need to standardise financial products in Europe, including a clearing house system, based for example on the existing system in the US;

- the complexity of the financial issues involved and the need, while moving forward quickly on these issues, to avoid over-facile or imperfect solutions;
- a reminder that Greece's excessive public debt was at the root of the current crisis;
- the advisability of being able to apply all the macro-economic indicators to the situation in Greece;
- the difficult economic and financial situation of other Member States and their vulnerability with regard to possible speculation;
- current competition rules and the need for additional information on CDS;
- the different situations of the Member States with regard to the euro and the need for good communication by the Commission on this point;
- the complexity of the financial issues involved and the difficulty of regulating too tightly speculative transactions concerning sovereign debts.

The PRESIDENT welcomed the measures announced to reduce Greece's public deficit and stressed that the Commission backed the Greek government in implementing these measures fully. The Commission was working to guarantee the stability of the euro zone and to prepare the aid mechanisms to which Greece and other Member States could have access.

The Commission was prepared to propose a European framework for securing coordinated financial assistance, where necessary, from Member States in the euro zone and was currently drawing up a communication on economic governance in the euro zone. The PRESIDENT stressed that the Commission was ready and willing if the Member States wished to act.

With regard to the speculations on the financial markets, he said that while it was true that they were not the direct cause of Greece's present problems, they were nevertheless an aggravating factor. He was therefore in favour of a radical reform of the derivatives market. This demonstrated the importance of the action already taken

in this field by the preceding Commission and being carried on by the current Commission.

He reminded the meeting that in its communication of 20 October 2009, the Commission had already committed itself to an action programme in support of efficient, secure and sound derivatives markets. He also noted that future legislative proposals, in particular the proposal for a derivatives directive to be presented by Mr BARNIER by next summer and the proposal for a directive on market abuse to be presented by him by the end of the year would increase market transparency and contain risks.

The PRESIDENT said that, in addition to the systemic response, a new ad hoc debate had arisen on credit default swap (CDS) markets with regard to the Member States' sovereign debt. The problem of "naked" positions merited particular attention since it seemed difficult to justify operators taking out an insurance policy (since that is what a CDS was in effect) based on a risk to which they were not exposed themselves and for purely speculative ends.

He felt that in the short term the Commission should provide the necessary coordination to ensure coordinated action by the Member States, in particular as regards "naked" positions, and urged Mr BARNIER to propose measures rapidly to that end. He added that the Commission would, in particular, examine the case for a ban on purely speculative short selling of CDS on sovereign debt, without at this stage prejudging the solutions that might be proposed.

The PRESIDENT stressed that at the same time, the Commission was pledged to international coordination, given the mobile and opaque nature of the markets in question, and would raise this question with its international partners, in particular its G20 partners. The issue of transparency between regulators, in particular access to information on positions, should also be raised during bilateral contacts, particularly with the US.

The Commission would conduct an in-depth analysis of the operation of the CDS markets and where necessary, in cases of breaches of competition rules, would use

all its powers to put an end to such infringements, although at this stage no specific sectoral investigation was envisaged.

The PRESIDENT went on to say that the Commission must be in a position to make proposals on these matters at the next European Council, and announced that he intended to revitalise the Economy and finance, competition and internal market group of commissioners in order to address this matter more effectively.

As regards the proposed creation of a European monetary fund, this idea had been put forward recently by a minister of a Member State and was regarded by the Commission at this stage as an interesting possibility to be examined in the long term. However, Greece's situation demanded more urgent measures, and the Commission was working on these with the euro zone Member States in accordance with the Treaty. An important question to be examined with regard to creation of a European monetary fund was whether or not to amend the treaty.

He pointed to the Commission's support for the positions put forward by Mr REHN and Mr BARNIER and noted Mr ALMUNIA's comments on the competition rules. In addition to the idea of creating a European monetary fund in the long term, the Commission was working actively on ways of reinforcing the financial surveillance mechanisms of the Member States in the euro zone. This work was being carried out in cooperation with the Member States, and the Commission was ready to help Greece to adopt and implement the necessary measures.

In conclusion, the PRESIDENT said that the Commission favoured a European framework for financial aid to support the euro zone, and would shortly propose stepping up coordination in the euro zone to enable more support to be given when necessary to Member States in difficulty. The next meeting of the Eurogroup would address these topics.

The next Commission meeting, on Thursday 11 March, would provide the opportunity for a brief exchange of information on these matters. Mr REHN and Mr BARNIER would provide information on the points covered above.

At the end of this debate, the Commission approved the communication in COM(2010)91 for transmission to the Council.

**13. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON THE RIGHT TO INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION IN CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS
(COM(2010)82 TO /3; SEC(2010)252)**

Ms REDING briefly introduced the proposal for a Directive on the right to interpretation and translation in criminal proceedings, which she was presenting for adoption. This was the first of a series of measures provided for in the roadmap on procedural rights adopted by the Council on 30 November 2009, which called on the Commission to present proposals on a step by step basis aimed at establishing EU-wide standards for a range of procedural rights. This first proposal was intended to help citizens exercise their right to a fair trial and was entirely in keeping with the European Convention on Human Rights and the Stockholm Programme, and particularly its aim of establishing a European area of law and justice based on mutual trust and safeguarding fair proceedings.

The Commission's proposal strengthened the citizen's right to interpretation and translation in three ways: interpretation of all interviews between suspects and their lawyers, written translation of all essential documents in the prosecution file, and the right to legal advice before waiving the right to interpretation and translation. Referring to the discussion in the Council on a proposal presented on the initiative of 13 Member States, Ms REDING hoped that Parliament and the Council would be able to reach an ambitious political agreement before the summer that would offer a high level of protection of the fundamental rights of citizens.

The Commission adopted the proposal for a Directive set out in COM(2010)82/3, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

14. OTHER BUSINESS

14.1. RESULTS OF COUNCIL MEETING (EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS) (BRUSSELS, 8 AND 9 MARCH)

Mr ANDOR reported on the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council which had taken place in Brussels the day before, where he had presented the labour market and employment aspects of the Europe 2020 strategy. He had particularly highlighted the objectives for employment and poverty reduction.

The ministers had welcomed the Commission communication and had recognised the importance of finding the best ways of reducing the impact of unemployment, namely on young people, women and older people. Youth unemployment had also been the subject of a special debate over lunch.

He also reported that the proposals on the need for greater efforts to reduce poverty had prompted a debate in the Council on the importance of improving social cohesion and the best ways of doing so.

The Commission took note of this information.

14.2. VISIT TO FRANCE AND PORTUGAL FOLLOWING THE SEVERE WEATHER IN CERTAIN REGIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION IN FEBRUARY (POITOU-CHARENTES, 3 AND 4 MARCH, AND MADEIRA, 6 AND 7 MARCH) (SEC(2010)281)

Mr HAHN reported on his visit to the Poitou-Charentes region of France on 3 and 4 March, and to Madeira on 6 and 7 March, after the floods which had struck these regions, causing very serious damage. Agricultural areas had been particularly badly affected, and it might be several years before the land

was fit to use again. He had expressed European solidarity with these regions and raised the possibility of securing aid from the European Union Solidarity Fund, and other assistance that might be available in the fisheries sector. The decisions relating to areas classified as suitable for development were the responsibility of the Member States, and these natural disasters reopened the debate on the case for some form of compensation for individuals, not just businesses and infrastructure.

The Commission then held a brief discussion in which it stressed the importance of using such visits to demonstrate the EU's solidarity with the regions affected and of using all the available instruments to put this solidarity into practice, for example through the Rural Development Fund. Further consideration should also be given, on the one hand, to the need for a European civil protection force and, on the other, to a comparative evaluation of private insurance systems for damage caused by natural disasters in the different Member States.

Ms REDING thanked Mr HAHN for his visits, which had helped to show the EU's compassionate response to these emergencies. She stressed the importance of promoting communication and cooperation between the various Commission departments, for example using factsheets that showed the contributions in each specific sector.

The Commission took note of this information and of Mr HAHN's note in SEC(2010)281.

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The meeting closed at 15.10.