



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2012)1998 final

Brussels, 2 May 2012

MINUTES

**of the 1998th meeting of the Commission
held in Strasbourg
(Winston Churchill building)
on Wednesday 18 April 2012
(afternoon)**

PV(2012)1998 final

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Single sitting: Wednesday 18 April 2012 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.08 with Mr BARROSO, President, in the chair.

Present:

Mr BARROSO	President	
Ms REDING	Vice-President	
Mr KALLAS	Vice-President	
Mr TAJANI	Vice-President	
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Mr REHN	Vice-President	
Mr BARNIER	Member	
Mr ŠEMETA	Member	
Mr DALLI	Member	
Ms GEOGHEGAN-QUINN	Member	
Mr LEWANDOWSKI	Member	
Ms DAMANAKI	Member	
Mr OETTINGER	Member	
Mr HAHN	Member	
Ms HEDEGAARD	Member	Item 8 (in part)
Mr FÜLE	Member	
Mr ANDOR	Member	
Ms MALMSTRÖM	Member	
Mr CIOLOŞ	Member	

Absent:

Baroness ASHTON	High Representative/ Vice-President
Mr ALMUNIA	Vice-President
Ms KROES	Vice-President
Mr POTOČNIK	Member
Mr PIEBALGS	Member
Ms VASSILIOU	Member
Mr DE GUCHT	Member
Ms GEORGIEVA	Member

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

Mr CEBALLOS BARÓN	A member of Baroness ASHTON's staff
Mr PÉREZ CALDENTEY	A member of Mr ALMUNIA's staff
Mr POWER	A member of Ms KROES's staff
Ms SOEWARTA	A member of Mr PIEBALGS's staff
Mr COMPTOUR	A member of Ms VASSILIOU's staff
Ms PERESSO	A member of Mr DE GUCHT's staff

The following also sat in:

Mr LAITENBERGER	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	
Mr DOENS	Head of the Commission Spokesperson Service	
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Commission Spokeswoman	
Mr HUDSON	European Commission Spokesperson Service	Item 8 (in part)
Mr SCHINAS	Bureau of European Policy Advisers	
Ms SKURATOWICZ	A member of the PRESIDENT's staff	
Mr LAHTI	Adviser in Mr REHN's Office	Item 8 (in part)
Mr MÜLLER	A member of Ms HEDEGAARD's staff	Item 8 (in part)

Secretary: Ms DAY, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms PASSI and Mr LE VILLAIN, administrators in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2012)1998/3; SEC(2012)235)

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

2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET

(RCC(2012)1998)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 16 April.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 1996TH MEETING OF THE COMMISSION (28 MARCH) AND THE MINUTES OF THE 1997TH MEETING (4 APRIL)

(PV(2012)1996)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 1996th meeting and decided to hold over for one week approval of the minutes of its 1997th meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2012)37)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group held on Friday 13 April (RCC(2012)37).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

i) Ordinary legislative procedure

(point 1.2 of the IRG record)

Dossiers at Parliament first reading

- Amendment of Regulation (EC) 302/2009 concerning a multiannual recovery plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean (Regulation) – ROMEVA I RUEDA report – 2011/0144 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2012)157/2.

- European standardisation – Amendment of Council Directives 89/686/EEC and 93/15/EEC and Directives 94/9/EC, 94/25/EC, 95/16/EC, 97/23/EC, 98/34/EC, 2004/22/EC, 2007/23/EC, 2009/105/EC and 2009/23/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council – (Regulation) – COMI report – 2011/0150 (COD)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2012)149.

- Permitted uses of orphan works (Directive) – GERINGER DE OEDENBERG report – 2011/0136 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2012)139/2.

- Amendment of Regulation (EC) 1060/2009 on credit rating agencies (Regulation) – DOMENICI report – 2011/361 (COD)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2012)140.

- Access to the activity of credit institutions and the prudential supervision of credit institutions and investment firms – Amendment of Directive 2002/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the supplementary supervision of credit institutions, insurance undertakings and investment firms in a financial conglomerate (Directive) / Prudential requirements for credit institutions and investment firms (Regulation) –

KARAS report – 2011/0203 (COD) / 2011/0202 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2012)142/3.

- Criminal sanctions for insider dealing and market manipulation (Directive) – MCCARTHY report – 2011/0297 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2012)143/2.

- Food intended for infants and young children and food for special medical purposes (Regulation) – RIES report – 2011/0156 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2012)153.

- Amendments to the Agreement Establishing the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) extending the geographic scope of EBRD operations to the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean (Decision) – BINEV report – 2011/0442 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2012)154/2.

Dossier at Council first reading

- Amendment of Regulation (EC) 1406/2002 establishing a European Maritime Safety Agency (Regulation) – FLECKENSTEIN report – 2010/0303 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2012)150.

ii) Preparation of the April part-session of Parliament

(point 1.3 of the IRG record)

Ordinary legislative procedure – First reading

- Amendment of Council Regulation (EC) 1083/2002 as regards certain provisions relating to risk sharing instruments for Member States experiencing or threatened with serious difficulties with respect to their financial stability (Regulation) – HÜBNER report – 2011/0283 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2012)261.

- Amendment of Regulation (EC) 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems and Regulation (EC) 987/2009 laying down the procedure for implementing Regulation (EC) 883/2004 (Regulation) – CABRNOCH report – 2010/0380 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2012)262.

Special legislative procedure

- Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) (Council Directive) – THYSSEN report – 2011/0058 (CNS)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2012)263 and /3.

- Amendment of Council Directive 2003/96/EC restructuring the Community framework for the taxation of energy products and electricity (Council Directive) – LULLING report – 2011/0092 (CNS)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2012)264 and /3.

Non-legislative procedure

- Conclusion of the Agreement between the United States of America and the European Union on the use and transfer of Passenger Name Records to the United States Department of Homeland Security (Council Decision) – IN 'T VELD report – 2011/0382 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2012)265 and /2.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

iii) Programming of Council business

(SI(2012)145; SI(2012)152)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2012)145 and SI(2012)152 on the Council meetings between 12 April and 2 May.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

iv) Preparation of the April part-session of Parliament

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

Non-legislative dossier

- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament on the detailed provisions governing the exercise of the European Parliament's right of inquiry – MARTIN report – 2009/2212 (INI)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2012)190 and /2.

v) Action taken on non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its February I part-session

(point 3.5.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved documents SP(2012)260 and /2 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its February I part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

vi) Participation by Members of Parliament in international conferences

(point 3.7 of the IRG record)

- Thirteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIII) (Doha, 21 to 26 April)

The Commission agreed to the request to the PRESIDENT from Mr Martin Schulz, President of Parliament, concerning the attendance of four Members of the European Parliament at the above-mentioned meeting as observers in the EU delegation, with a reminder about the procedure to be followed.

- Eighteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Climate Change
(Doha, 3 to 8 December)

The Commission agreed to the request to the PRESIDENT from Mr Martin Schulz, President of Parliament, concerning the attendance of fifteen Members of the European Parliament at the above-mentioned meeting as observers in the EU delegation, with a reminder about the procedure to be followed.

4.4. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- vii) Decision on the signature and provisional application of the Common Aviation Area Agreement between the European Union and its Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part – 2012/0004 (NLE)**
(point 5.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2012)151/2.

5. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

5.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED **(SEC(2012)236 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 2 and 13 April.

5.2. EMPOWERMENT **(SEC(2012)237 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 2 and 13 April.

**5.3. DELEGATION AND SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS
(SEC(2012)238 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 2 and 13 April, as archived in e-Greffe.

**5.4. SENSITIVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2012)239)**

The Commission took note of the sensitive written procedures for which the time limit expired between 16 and 20 April.

**5.5. GENERAL EMPOWERMENT WITH A VIEW TO THE ADOPTION OF
DECISIONS NOT TO OBJECT TO AID MEASURES THAT WILL BE
REGARDED AS EXISTING AID FROM THE DATE OF ACCESSION
UNDER THE PROCEDURE PROVIDED FOR IN ANNEX IV,
CHAPTER 2, PARAGRAPH 1(C) (UNDER ARTICLE 16) OF THE
TREATY OF ACCESSION OF CROATIA TO THE EUROPEAN UNION
(C(2012)2498)**

The Commission granted the general empowerment set out in C(2012)2498 to the Member of the Commission responsible for competition to adopt, on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility, decisions not to object to a list of aid measures that would be regarded as existing aid from the date of accession under the procedure provided for in Annex IV, Chapter 2, paragraph 1(c) (under Article 16) of the Treaty of Accession of Croatia, provided that each measure included in that list fulfilled the criteria set out in point 3 above.

5.6. *DELEGATION OF POWERS TO THE HEARING OFFICER RELATING TO THE ADOPTION OF CERTAIN MEASURES IN TRADE PROCEEDINGS UNDER ARTICLE 207 OF THE TREATY ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE EUROPEAN UNION*
(C(2012)2422; C(2012)2)

The Commission decided to delegate to the Hearing Officer, who is attached for administrative purposes to the Member of the Commission responsible for trade policy and whose function and terms of reference are laid down by the decision of the PRESIDENT of 29 February 2012 and set out in C(2012)2, the power to adopt on behalf of the Commission and under its responsibility certain measures in trade proceedings under Article 207 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, in accordance with the terms laid down in C(2012)2422.

6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2012)240/2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2012)53/2)

6.1. *SECRETARIAT GENERAL / DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – MEASURES TO ENSURE COHERENCE AND COORDINATION OF THE COMMISSION’S CONTRIBUTION TO THE MONITORING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR GREECE*

In accordance with Article 22 of the Commission’s Rules of Procedure, which authorises the PRESIDENT to set up specific functions or structures to deal with particular matters, the PRESIDENT has taken the following decisions, which the Commission is asked to take note of:

- Mr REHN would directly oversee the Task Force for Greece, thereby ensuring coherence and coordination of the Commission's contribution for

Greece; application of this measure would not affect the Task Force's obligation to report to the PRESIDENT, under the guidance of Mr REHN;

- the Task Force for Greece would be fully integrated within DG Economic and Financial Affairs and would no longer be attached to the Director-General for Human Resources and Security; all staff currently dealing with Greece in DG Economic and Financial Affairs and in the Task Force would be located physically and organisationally under the same roof, both in the headquarters in Brussels and in Athens.

These decisions would take effect on 1 May 2012.

6.2. SECRETARIAT GENERAL / DG ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS / DG BUDGET / DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE TASK FORCE FOR GREECE (C(2012)2688; SEC(2012)257)

On a proposal from Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, Mr REHN and Mr LEWANDOWSKI, the Commission decided:

- to endorse the new communication lines, reporting arrangements and staff allocation for the Task Force for Greece and the arrangements for long-stay missions by staff of DG Economic and Financial Affairs and the Task Force sent to countries receiving a programme of assistance, as set out in C(2012)2688; to adopt the organisation chart in SEC(2012)257, it being understood that all officials would continue to be assigned to the Task Force for Greece by their current services, including those occupying management functions appearing in the organisation chart, and that no organisation chart functions would be created within the Task Force;
- that the composition of the Task Force for Greece, including decisions on appointments, recruitments, transfers and the termination of contracts, would be decided by the appointing authority and the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment, in agreement with the

Head of the Task Force and after consulting the Secretariat-General and DG Human Resources and Security; the ceilings for the number of staff from different staff categories could be modified by the PRESIDENT in agreement with Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, Mr REHN and Mr LEWANDOWSKI;

- that the Head of the Task Force would continue to act as the hierarchical superior of all Task Force staff on a day-to-day basis and with regard to all tasks necessary for the accomplishment of its mission; without prejudice to the powers conferred on the appointing authority, the Head of the Task Force would be consulted by all DGs which had sent staff to the Task Force on all administrative and personnel decisions, notably with regard to appraisals and promotions; the Head of the Task Force would authorise leave, missions and working hours, without prejudice to the existing financial and operational workflows;
- to confirm the decision adopted at the 1975th Commission meeting on 12 October 2011 on the arrangements for assigning management staff to the Task Force and on their priority reintegration into management functions in their DG of origin, after the end of their assignment to the Task Force;
- to confirm the decisions taken by the Commission on 20 December 2011 and 20 July 2011 on derogations from the applicable rules in relation to DG Economic and Financial Affairs and the Task Force for Greece;
- that DG Communication would immediately make available to the enlarged Athens Office of DG Economic and Financial Affairs and the Task Force for Greece suitable and secure office space and the corresponding logistical arrangements, if necessary with the dedicated support of the Office for Infrastructure and Logistics in Brussels, as an exception to Article 3 of Commission Decision 2003/523/EC, together with the necessary budgetary support;

- that the Directorate-General for Informatics would provide the Task Force with the necessary computer and telephone equipment as a priority;
- that the financial needs would be covered by the available budget, making use of all the established budgetary procedures as necessary;
- that the *hors classe* adviser functions of Mr Jorgen HOLMQUIST and Mr David WRIGHT would be abolished with immediate effect after they ceased to occupy them;
- that the function of Head of the Athens Office of DG Economic and Financial Affairs would be created as a senior management function, at a level to be determined by simplified procedure;
- that the arrangements for operation of the Task Force would be reviewed by the Secretariat-General and by DG Budget and DG Human Resources and Security, at least on an annual basis on the occasion of the spring reorganisation package and revised where necessary; that the Task Force would receive administrative support from DG Human Resources and Security and priority service from the central services and administrative offices even after its integration into DG Economic and Financial Affairs.

These decisions would take effect on 1 May 2012.

**6.3. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPOINTMENT OF
AD15/16 DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2012)21 TO /4)**

The Commission had before it an application under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Director-General of DG Human Resources and Security (PERS(2012)21 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 12 and 22 March (PERS(2012)21/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to consider the applicant's qualifications for the post. It also considered his ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it then decided to appoint Mr Fernando FRUTUOSO DE MELO to the post.

This decision would take effect on 1 May 2012.

**6.4. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR HEAD OF EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION OR HEAD OF EUROPEAN UNION OFFICE POSTS
(PERS(2012)55; PERS(2012)56; PERS(2012)58; PERS(2012)59; PERS(2012)60; PERS(2011)102/2)**

The Commission took note of the information at point 4 of PERS(2012)53/2 and, on a proposal from Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided to approve the lists of candidates in PERS(2012)55, PERS(2012)56, PERS(2011)102/2, PERS(2012)59, PERS(2012)60 and PERS(2012)58 respectively, for the posts of Head of the European Union Delegations to Barbados, Bolivia, Chile, East Timor and Malaysia and for the post of Head of the European Union Office in Hong Kong; these lists would serve as a basis for the competent authority of the European External Action Service to make the final appointments.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**6.5. DG INTERNAL MARKET AND SERVICES – TERMINATION OF THE SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR AN AD14/15 DIRECTOR POST
(PERS(2012)10 TO /3)**

On a proposal from Mr ŠEFČOVIČ, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Mr BARNIER, the Commission decided to terminate – without making any appointment – internal selection procedure COM/2011/2926 for the post of Director, 'Financial Institutions', in DG Internal Market and Services.

This decision would take effect immediately.

7. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – TOWARDS A JOBS-RICH RECOVERY

(COM(2012)173 TO /3; SWD(2012)90 AND /2; SWD(2012)92 AND /2; SWD(2012)93 ET /2; SWD(2012)95 AND /2; SWD(2012)96 AND /2; SWD(2012)97 AND /2; SWD(2012)98; SWD(2012)99 AND /2; SWD(2012)100; RCC(2012)35)

The Commission approved the Communication in COM(2012)173/3, for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, and, for information, to the national parliaments, together with the staff working documents distributed as SWD(2012)90, SWD(2012)92/2, SWD(2012)93/2, SWD(2012)95/2, SWD(2012)96/2, SWD(2012)97/2, SWD(2012)98, SWD(2012)99/2, SWD(2012)100, the contents of which were noted.

8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS AND THE EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK – GROWTH FOR GREECE

(COM(2012)183 AND /2)

The PRESIDENT stated first that the Communication submitted for approval this day arose from the need to satisfy several requirements, namely to boost growth in Greece and to underline, for the other Member States and their citizens, the European Parliament and the media, the far-reaching, extensive efforts to help Greece which the European Union was already making and would continue to make in the coming years.

The main purpose of the exercise was to rebuild confidence, hence the Communication conveyed a message of hope, underlining the fact that the efforts and sacrifices by the Greek people would bear fruit in the near future. It was also intended to dispel doubt and combat the negative attitudes emerging in Greece, in euro-area Member States, in the European Union and in non-EU countries; it emphasised the need to boost growth in Greece through enhanced competitiveness as well as fiscal consolidation.

The Communication highlighted the unprecedented mobilisation of the entire Commission to foster growth and employment in Greece and to alleviate where possible the social consequences of the crisis, contrary to the perceptions of some that the only aspect taken into account was fiscal consolidation. The Commission was determined to convey a message of solidarity of a kind not witnessed since the Marshall plan. In fact, all the measures taken to date formed what was in effect a Marshall plan for Greece, as could be seen clearly from the figures in the Communication.

Moreover, the PRESIDENT pointed out that the Communication also emphasised that Greece itself must take its future into its own hands through the specific measures that the Greek Government would have to adopt in the coming months. The document underlined several commitments by Greece while acknowledging the efforts already made; if the second adjustment programme went ahead as planned, this would gradually start to yield results in terms of jobs and growth.

Lastly, he noted that the proposed Communication had been carefully drafted to avoid any accusations of interference in the election campaign in progress in Greece. It was important for each Member to point out whenever necessary that the second adjustment programme was a Greek programme, approved by the Greek Government and Parliament, and with the explicit, written support of all the main political leaders. Following the elections, they would have to implement this programme in line with the commitments made, and while the size of the Annex to this Communication was a good indication of the Commission's total support for Greece in dealing with these challenges, it was Greece alone which could and must assume full responsibility for this.

Ending his presentation, the PRESIDENT underlined once again the special nature of the Greek situation, saying that jobs and growth were just as important for the future of Greece as fiscal consolidation and financial stability.

Mr REHN in turn presented the Communication, saying that it was neither a new programme nor a modification of the Second Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece. The main objective of this Communication was to indicate clearly the measures taken by the European Union to help Greece, and in particular to ensure the visibility of the Commission's efforts to support the reforms needed to unlock Greece's growth potential.

First he thanked all the Commission Members who had contributed to the preparation of the Communication, saying that it reflected the work of many departments in the Commission since the reforms agreed in the Greek adjustment programme came under several EU sectoral policies. The interconnection between the various areas for reform was set out in the Communication, in particular the reform of the tax system and the tax authorities, the restoration of competitiveness through the modernisation of the labour market and the measures to promote business and hence stimulate growth.

As regards the reform of the tax system, Greece needed to step up compliance with tax obligations and remove the exemptions and preferential schemes that had paved the way for abuse, evasion and avoidance. As for the labour market, there was a need to adjust unit labour costs and to introduce measures to reduce indirect labour costs. These were key elements in the programme. Mr REHN then went through the series of measures set out in the Communication to promote business and stimulate growth, such as the removal of superfluous administrative formalities to make exportation easier and stimulate investment, and the opening up of certain economic sectors to allow new players to enter the market.

Lastly, he stressed the fact that effective governance was needed in relation to gains in productivity if they were to reinforce the competitiveness of companies. This required steadfast action to set up a modern public administration.

With regard to the EU budget's financial support measures for Greece, Mr REHN mentioned first the guarantee fund for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This fund was set up recently with the Commission's support with up to €500 million from the Structural Funds, with the possibility of supplying additional funds of up to €1 billion for loans to SMEs. He then referred to the Commission's close cooperation with the European Investment Bank with a view to providing financial instruments to facilitate access to credit for Greek SMEs, the Commission's proposal to create a risk-sharing instrument to support large-scale infrastructure projects, the proposal to increase the EU's co-financing rate for the Structural Funds in Greece and the amendment of the rules to allow co-financing of businesses' working capital.

He said that the Commission had drawn up a list of 181 priority projects under co-financing arrangements. The support for these projects from the Structural Funds was around €11.5 billion. He ended by saying again that the Commission was working on all possible fronts to support the economic transformation of Greece.

During the ensuing discussion, the following main points were raised:

- general support for the proposed Communication, which conveyed a message of solidarity by the European Union towards Greece, while giving an overview of the measures taken by the Union to assist Greece and emphasising the benefits that could result from immediate implementation of the first measures under the programme;
- the need for the positive effects of these measures to be felt as quickly as possible by the Greek people to ensure that a fair and equitable reform process could be implemented;
- the importance of avoiding any accusation of interference with the electoral process currently under way and of taking on board both the sensitivity of Greek public opinion and the complexity of reorganising the Greek political spectrum;

- the fact that the Greek authorities had not fully exploited all the possible assistance offered by the Union; for example, the final beneficiaries of the mobilisation of the Structural Funds, in particular SMEs, were as yet unable to benefit from the measures taken by the Union;
- the urgent need for Greece to step up its efforts to achieve the objectives of absorbing Structural Fund resources; in addition, the need for better and full use of the financing granted to Greece, for example in the areas of rural development, border management, migration and asylum policy;
- with regard to the current privatisation in the energy and gas sectors, for example in relation to the Southern Mediterranean gas corridor, the need for a global strategy enabling investors to be selected on the basis of the Union's medium- and long-term interests;
- the case for a European initiative for growth to make more visible and put into perspective, in a single document, the interaction between the Europe 2020 strategy, the Single Market Act, the Communication on employment and the initiatives in the area of research;
- the need to make the Commission's commitment to Greece more visible by stepping up the presence of its Members on the ground.

The PRESIDENT concluded the discussion by thanking Mr REHN for the work carried out and the other Commission Members for their contributions during the meeting and in the process of preparing and drafting the document. He considered that this Communication fully conveyed the collective effort made beforehand and the scope of the support provided to Greece, while pointing out that the Commission's intention in sending Greece this message of hope for the future was not to stand in its place or take on responsibilities that fell outside the Commission's remit.

He also recognised that the Communication was being approved at a politically sensitive time, but felt that it was important for it to be presented before the parliamentary elections. He asked each Commissioner to travel to Greece to support

the communication actions there and demonstrate visibly not just the Commission's support for the Greek people but everything it had done to lay the groundwork for inclusive growth and sustainable development in Europe.

The PRESIDENT noted the Commission's unanimous backing for the proposed text and its agreement that the following amendments be made to the English language version of COM(2012)183/2:

- **on page 7 of the Communication, in sub-section 2.1.3. (*“Freeing business to drive growth”*), the paragraph *“Restoring cost-competitiveness”* is amended as follows:**

“As part of the modernisation efforts of the Greek labour market, measures are needed to foster a rapid adjustment of unit labour costs to fight unemployment and restore the cost-competitiveness of the Greek economy. As agreed in the Second Economic Adjustment Programme, measures to foster a rapid adjustment of labour costs to fight unemployment and restore cost competitiveness should aim, together with measures that have already been taken, at reducing nominal unit labour costs in the business economy by 15 percent in 2012-2014. Such measures should take account of the outcome of the social dialogue and go hand-in-hand with broader efforts at strengthening labour market institutions, smoothing wage bargaining at all levels and fighting undeclared work.”;

- **on page 12 of the Communication, in sub-section 2.2.2. (*“Active labour market policy”*), the content of the box *“Actions in 2012”* is amended as follows:**

“More effective use of the available European Social Fund resources to put in place a fully functioning framework to support the social economy and social enterprises as well as the key drivers for a job rich recovery and to address the multi-faceted integration needs of vulnerable groups.”;

- **on page 32 of the Communication, in sub-section 3.3. of the Annex (*“Using privatisation to improve the functioning of important sectors of the economy”*), the last paragraph is amended as follows:**

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“In some well-defined cases and without taking away from the priority projects mentioned in section 3.4, the EU structural funds may be able to play a role in supporting the privatisation programme through technical assistance or by supporting physical investment in areas such as energy or transport to help prepare state owned assets for sale by first improving their operations, thereby delivering better results to users and enhancing the potential value creation of these assets.”.

Subject to the introduction of the above amendments, the Commission approved the Communication set out in COM(2012)183/2, for transmission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the European Investment Bank and, for information, to the national parliaments.

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The meeting closed at 14.29.