



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2020) 2322 final

- *English language version of the French text which is authentic* -

Strasbourg, 11 February 2020

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2322nd meeting of the Commission
held in Brussels
(Berlaymont)
on Wednesday 22 January 2020
(morning)**

PV(2020) 2322 final

- *English language version of the French text which is authentic* -

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Single sitting: Wednesday 22 January 2020 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.05 with Mr TIMMERMANS in the chair, the PRESIDENT being absent.

Present:

Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative/ Vice-President
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President
Mr HAHN	Member
Mr GENTILONI	Member
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member
Mr BRETON	Member
Ms FERREIRA	Member
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member
Mr REYNDERS	Member
Ms DALLI	Member
Ms JOHANSSON	Member
Ms LENARČIČ	Member
Ms VÁLEAN	Member
Ms VÁRHELYI	Member
Ms SIMSON	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member

Absent:

Ms von der LEYEN	President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President
Mr HOGAN	Member
Ms GABRIEL	Member
Mr SCHMIT	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member

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

Mr NOCIAR	Chef de cabinet to Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	
Ms SIRACUSA	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr HOGAN	
Ms KIRALY	Chef de cabinet to Ms GABRIEL	
Ms BERTULESSI	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Mr SCHMIT	
Mr LAHTI	Chef de cabinet to Ms URPILAINEN	Items 8 (in part) and 9

The following also sat in:

Ms RISO	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr ROMERO REQUENA	Director-General, Legal Service	
Ms AHRENKILDE HANSEN	Director-General, DG Communication	
Mr MAMER	Head of the Spokesperson's Service and Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms CABRAL	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 8
Ms VILA NUÑEZ	PRESIDENT's Office	
Ms FURNIERE	PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr SAMSOM	Chef de cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS	
Mr SCICLUNA	Chef de cabinet to Ms ŠUICA	Item 8
Mr VALERO LADRÓN	Secretariat-General	
Ms SPINANT	Commission Spokesperson's Service	

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2020) 2322/FINAL; SEC(2020) 2322/FINAL)

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(2020) 2322)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Friday 17 January 2020.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2319TH, 2320TH AND 2321ST MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (17 DECEMBER 2019, 8 AND 14 JANUARY 2020)

The Commission held over approval of the minutes of its 2319th, 2320th and 2321st meetings for a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

4.1. RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND THE COUNCIL

i) Programming of Council business

(SI(2020) 20)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2020) 20 on the Council meetings between 23 January and 5 February 2020.

- ii) **Application of Article 128(5) of the Withdrawal Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom (exception to the principle of non-participation of the United Kingdom in Member State meetings during the transition period)**

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2020) 19.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

- iii) **Action to be taken on Parliament's legislative resolutions and other resolutions of a legal nature**
(SP(2020) 1)

The Commission took note of document SP(2020) 1, drawn up following Parliament's January I 2020 part-session.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION **(RCC(2020) 10)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2020) 10 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 15 January 2020.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED **SEC(2020) 44 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 13 and 17 January 2020.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

SEC(2020) 45 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 13 and 19 January 2020.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

SEC(2020) 46 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 13 and 17 January 2020 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2020) 47)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 20 and 24 January 2020.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2020) 48)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

***DECISION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION
RELATING TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMITMENTS MADE
BY A MEMBER OF THE COMMISSION IN ORDER TO PREVENT AND
ADDRESS ANY POTENTIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST***

(P(2020) 1)

The Commission took note of the PRESIDENT's decision in P(2020) 1.

8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – SHAPING THE CONFERENCE ON THE FUTURE OF EUROPE

(COM(2020) 27 TO /3 ; RCC(2020) 9)

Mr TIMMERMANS invited Ms ŠUICA and Ms JOUROVÁ to present to the College the broad lines of the Commission's contribution to the discussion initiated with the European Parliament and the Council to jointly define the scope, format, structure and objectives of the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe.

Ms ŠUICA began by noting that the aim of the Conference was to foster and cultivate the desire for greater participation on the part of citizens in the European project as reflected in the turnout in the 2019 European elections, which had been the highest in 20 years. She stated that citizen engagement should be encouraged through the establishment of an open, transparent and structured dialogue based on mutual trust, the results of which would be taken into account not only in policy making but also at institutional level, thereby enabling citizens to play the leading, active role that was rightfully theirs.

She highlighted the conditions that would ensure the success of the Conference.

Firstly, she considered it essential not to pre-empt the outcome of the consultation process, as regards either the policy-making or institutional dimension and, consequently, to provide all the necessary means to allow the public to express themselves unreservedly, and thereby to consolidate their increasing involvement in the European project.

She then underlined the value of learning from the positive experience of the citizens' dialogues held over the course of the previous mandate in order to precisely define the parameters of the Conference on the Future of Europe, and particularly one of its areas of added value: an effective feedback mechanism for citizens to enable them to assess the extent to which their contributions were taken into account.

Finally, she highlighted the crucial role of communication in the deployment of the initiative. It was particularly important that the Conference be communicated in a way that would ensure it reached citizens in all corners of the Union, whether or not they used social networks. She also encouraged the Members of the College, who would be the first ambassadors of the Conference on the Future of Europe, to fully integrate this innovative and ambitious new way of working. She added that the Conference could serve an educational purpose at grass-roots level by allowing the work of the Commission to be explained and promoted.

She noted that it would only be possible to examine the issue of the financing of the Conference once the participants in the process were known. She pointed out that, in addition to the Commission, the European Parliament and the Council, who would agree on the main elements of the Conference in a Joint Declaration, other partners would be able to join.

Ms ŠUICA warmly thanked the Secretariat-General and the Directorate-General for Communication as well as the Members of the College for their important contributions, particularly in the context of the policy debate held on 17 December 2019. She was particularly grateful to Ms JOUROVÁ and Mr ŠEFČOVIČ for their valuable support.

She was pleased to note that, due to the coordination of efforts over the first 100 days of the mandate, a balanced and dynamic Communication had been drafted. She welcomed this strong contribution to the discussions between the three EU institutions on shaping the Conference on the Future of Europe.

She stated that the European Parliament had proposed its own contribution to the discussion in a resolution of 15 January 2020 and that the subject was on the agenda of the General Affairs Council of 28 January 2020.

She concluded by expressing the hope that the Conference on the Future of Europe could be launched on the symbolic date of 9 May 2020, thereby marking not only

Europe Day but also the 70th anniversary of the Schuman Declaration and the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

Ms JOUROVÁ welcomed the modest and balanced tone of the Commission's Communication, which made a constructive contribution to the discussion with the other two institutions with a view to their Joint Declaration.

As part of this discussion, she invited the Members of the Commission to give thought to an innovative way of organising the Conference that would respect the European Green Deal. She was concerned about the cumbersome nature of the organisation proposed in the European Parliament's Resolution and the environmental consequences of the amount of travel it would involve.

Apart from the question of financing the Conference, which in her view would have to be addressed as part of this interinstitutional discussion, she said it was important not to overlook the impact of the name and visual identity of the initiative on its appeal to the public.

With regard to the institutional dimension of the Conference, Ms JOUROVÁ pointed out that the Commission would have to play the role of a facilitator and impartial mediator between Parliament and the Council and be ready, if required, to provide objective legal and institutional expertise without pre-empting the outcome of the consultation. However, she drew attention to the fact that the timetable for this aspect of the Conference would be dictated by the European elections in 2024, since any change affecting them would have to be operational well before they were held.

In the course of the discussion that followed, the Commission raised the following key points:

- the reflection that had already started on the future of Europe, based on the previous Commission's White Paper, which had produced various scenarios for structuring the discussions with the public and in the context of the last European elections;

- a reminder of the Commission’s contribution to that exercise, by organising no fewer than 1,800 citizens’ debates between Members of the College and EU citizens at local, regional and national level;
- the importance of the lessons drawn from these debates, particularly as regards the public’s desire to debate specific proposals and social issues relating directly to their daily concerns; similarly, a call to underline the improvements that would give added value to such debates;
- a call for efforts to be made to ensure that the conditions for the success of the Conference on the Future of Europe were properly defined and the goal clearly specified;
- the significant increase in voter turnout at the last European elections, due largely to public awareness of the growing relevance of the European Union and its policies to the issues that most concerned them across a wide range of areas, from the environment to immigration, the digital transformation and social protection;
- the leading role to be played in this context by the Commission because of its right of initiative. Its mission was to present specific proposals that took into account the general interest and were intended to be debated not only by the institutions but also by members of the public so that they could make political choices and take ownership of the Union’s decisions;
- the need for the forthcoming debates on the future of Europe to be as inclusive as possible, particularly from the point of view of participation of citizens and the authorities at local, regional and national level;
- the need to design the Conference in such a way as to arouse genuine interest and create a momentum among the public, rather than planning a succession of meetings accessible only to a well-informed audience;

- the importance of the Commission defining more clearly the objectives of the Conference and the nature of the celebration on 9 May to launch it;
- a suggestion that, instead of organising recurrent conferences on the future of the Union during each Commission’s term of office, a permanent dialogue should be established. This would mean changing the nature of the process and what it was called;
- another proposal to change the title of the Conference on the Future of Europe so as not to suggest that the EU institutions doubted that future, on the one hand, and in order to find a title that was more appealing to the public, on the other;
- the major role that the use of social media could play in setting up the debates; the importance, too, of monitoring social media activity to prevent the spread of fake news and to allow informed debate;
- as regards the institutional aspect, the need for the Commission to contribute to the discussions by including its own priorities, while defending its prerogatives and its role in the European Union’s institutional triangle;
- the legitimacy of the European Parliament’s priorities in this area, such as promoting the system of lead candidates or forming transnational lists in European elections;
- the need for the Commission to actively promote discussion on the use of unanimous voting in the Council and a debate on the relevance of intergovernmental treaties in the context of the Union; more generally, the importance of the Commission also proposing its own institutional objectives as a contribution to the discussions on the future of Europe;
- for some, the fact that the Commission should as far as possible anticipate the institutional changes that might arise from the Conference and should include its political priorities in the framework of the discussions;

- for others, the importance of not prejudging the outcome of the debates and not ruling out any option as regards the follow-up and the specific proposals they might generate, including when such proposals implied amending the Treaties;
- questions about the cost of organising another Conference on the Future of Europe and where the funding would come from to enable the project to achieve its ambitious objectives.

Ms ŠUIČA thanked the Members of the College for this constructive and fruitful debate, which reflected the interest they all took in the Conference and its success.

She reiterated the need to draw on the positive experience of the 1,800 citizens' debates organised during the previous Commission's term of office, and to extend the scope still further so that the public's call for its voice to be heard, as witnessed by the record turnout in the 2019 European elections, did not go unheeded.

As regards the content of the Conference, she noted that the six headline ambitions for Europe set out by the PRESIDENT in her political guidelines and the European Council's strategic agenda for 2019-2024 would frame the debate but not limit its scope. She stressed that the aim was to encourage people to raise the subjects that most interested them. This flexible but structured approach should also enable the Conference to take better account of specific local circumstances.

Ms ŠUIČA said she wanted the title of the initiative to appeal to the public. She agreed that the word 'conference' might suggest something theoretical and not very interactive, which was not what was intended. As far as this was concerned, she stressed that the Commission contribution being presented that day was only a preparatory document and the content was likely to evolve. The important thing, at this stage, was to agree with the European Parliament and the Council on a joint declaration setting out the broad outlines of this ambitious initiative.

Mr TIMMERMANS said that the matters of interest or concern to Europe's citizens were in fact already known because most of them had been voiced on the street. He

emphasised the leading role the Commission could play in structuring the debates with its six political priorities.

As for the institutional aspect of the Conference, he noted the importance which the European Parliament attached to the issue of the system of lead candidates from the European political parties standing for the Commission Presidency. This question had been brought up again in the 2019 European elections, which had demonstrated the versatility of the initial defenders of this system. He warned against yet another repeat of the binary debate between a federalist Europe and a Europe of nation states.

Although this Conference on the Future of Europe was undoubtedly oriented towards the citizens and focused on them, Mr TIMMERMANS warned Members not to lose sight of the power dynamics beneath the surface of such an exercise. These dynamics were different for each of the three EU institutions, and he urged the Commission to adapt its position accordingly, notably in the interinstitutional preparations for the Conference, in order to ensure that its role was not unduly diluted.

Mr TIMMERMANS thanked Ms ŠUIČA for her presentation and the Members of the College for their commitment to making a practical contribution to the process of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

Following this discussion, the Commission approved the Communication in COM(2020) 27/3 for transmission to Parliament and the Council, and, for information, to the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and national parliaments.

9. RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

At the invitation of Mr TIMMERMANS, Mr BORRELL reported on the latest developments in external relations, particularly the situation in Libya and the measures taken by the Union to preserve the Iran Nuclear Deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action – JCPOA).

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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 10.32.