



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2020) 2341 final

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

Brussels, 24 June 2020

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2341st meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 10 June 2020

(morning)

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PV(2020) 2341 final

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

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Single sitting: Wednesday 10 June 2020 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.10 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President
Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative/ Vice-President
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President
Mr HAHN	Member
Mr HOGAN	Member
Ms GABRIEL	Member
Mr SCHMIT	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 VÁLEAN	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member
Ms SIMSON	Member
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member

Absent:

Mr LENARČIČ

Member

[illegible]

Mr SEIBERT	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	
Mr LEARDINI	Deputy Secretary-General	
Ms RISO	Deputy Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	Items 1 to 7
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Ms CABRAL	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Item 8
Ms HILI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Item 9
Ms VILA NUÑEZ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr BARNIER	Head of the Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom	Items 1 to 7
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Secretariat-General	
Mr VALERO LADRÓN	Secretariat-General	

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

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2020) 2341/FINAL; SEC(2020) 2341/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) 2341)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 8 June 2020.

3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2336TH, 2337TH, 2338TH, 2339TH AND 2340TH MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (6, 13, 20, 27 MAY, AND 3 JUNE 2020)

(PV(2020) 2336; PV(2020) 2336, 2ND PART; PV(2020) 2337; PV(2020) 2338)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2336th, 2337th and 2338th meetings and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2339th and 2340th meetings.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2020) 83)

The Commission took note of the record of the virtual meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held during the week of 2 to 5 June 2020 (RCC(2020) 83).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- i) Amendment of Regulation (EU) 1305/2013 as regards specific measures to provide exceptional temporary support under the EAFRD in response to the COVID-19 outbreak (Regulation) – LINS report – 2020/0075 (COD)**

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 177.

- ii) Amendment of Regulations (EU) 575/2013 and (EU) 2019/876 as regards adjustments in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Regulation) – FERNÁNDEZ report – 2020/0066 (COD)**

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 181.

4.2. HORIZONTAL ITEM

- iii) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – Trilogue**

- European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Regulation) – MATO report – 2018/0210 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 176.

4.3. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

- iv) Trilogue**

- Streamlining measures for advancing the realisation of the trans-European transport network (Regulation) – RIQUET report – 2018/0138 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 180/2.

v) Council dossier

- Amendment of Directive 2006/1/EC on the use of vehicles hired without drivers for the carriage of goods by road (Directive) – MONTEIRO DE AGUIAR report – 2017/0113 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 178.

4.4. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

vi) Action taken on legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its May I 2020 part-session
(SP(2020) 229)

The Commission approved document SP(2020) 229 on the action taken on the legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its May I 2020 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

4.5. RELATIONS WITH NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS, THE OTHER INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

vii) Follow-up to opinions of the Committee of the Regions – Plenary session of February 2020
(SR(2020) 7/2)

The Commission approved document SR(2020) 7/2 on the action taken by the Commission on the opinions adopted by the Committee of the Regions at its session of February 2020, for transmission to the Committee of the Regions.

4.6. OTHER BUSINESS

viii) Selection and appointment of European Prosecutors of the European Public Prosecutor's Office
(SI(2020) 171)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 171.

ix) European Defence Fund (Regulation) – KRASNODEBSKI report – 2018/0254 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 175 and /2.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2020) 68/3)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2020) 68/3 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held by videoconference and teleconference on Wednesday 3 June 2020.

**6. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2020) 211/2)**

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2020) 44)**

**6.1. DG ENERGY – APPOINTMENT OF AN AD14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2020) 45 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 of the ‘Energy Policy’ Directorate in DG Energy (PERS(2020) 45).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 25 and 28 May 2020 (PERS(2020) 45/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants’ qualifications for the post. It also considered their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On

a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms SIMSON, it then decided to appoint Ms Cristina LOBILLO BORRERO to the post.

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

**6.2. DG ENERGY – APPOINTMENT OF AN AD14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2020) 46 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 of the ‘Internal Energy Market’ Directorate in DG Energy (PERS(2020) 46).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 20 and 28 May 2020 (PERS(2020) 46/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants’ qualifications for the post. It also considered their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms SIMSON, it then decided to appoint Ms Catharina SIKOW-MAGNY to the post.

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

**6.3. DG REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY – APPOINTMENT OF AN
AD14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2020) 47 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 of the ‘Budget, Communication and General Affairs’ Directorate in DG Regional and Urban Policy (PERS(2020) 47).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 20 April and 7 May 2020 (PERS(2020) 47/2 and /3).

(10 June 2020)

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. It also considered their ability, efficiency and conduct in the service. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms FERREIRA, it then decided to appoint Ms Monika HENCSEY to the post.

This decision would take effect on 1 July 2020.

6.4. *DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY/DG HUMANITARIAN AID AND CIVIL PROTECTION (ECHO) – DEROGATION FROM THE COMMISSION DECISION ON CONTRACT STAFF AS PART OF THE PROVISION OF EMERGENCY SUPPORT IN THE UNION IN RELATION TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC*

In order to provide, immediately and efficiently, emergency support to the Member States hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr LENARČIČ, decided to authorise, until 31 December 2020, DG Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) to deploy in the European Union two individual experts employed under the labour laws of a Member State, as part of the emergency support instrument and by derogation from Article 17(2)(a) of Commission Decision C(2017) 6760 of 16 October 2017 on the general provisions for implementing Article 79(2) of the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants of the European Union, governing the conditions of employment of contract staff employed by the Commission under the terms of Articles 3a and 3b thereof.

This decision would take effect immediately.

6.5. *COMMISSION DECISIONS ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF THREE FORMER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION (C(2020) 9024; C(2020) 9025; C(2020) 9026)*

The Commission adopted the Decisions set out in C(2020) 9024,

C(2020) 9025 and C(2020) 9026.

The Commission specifically decided that the professional activities envisaged by Ms Federica MOGHERINI, Mr Günther OETTINGER and Mr Vytenis ANDRIUKAITIS after leaving office as Members of the Commission were compatible with Article 245(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and with the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, subject to certain specific conditions and obligations.

7. FUTURE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Mr BARNIER reported to the College on the latest developments relating to negotiations on the future partnership between the Union and the United Kingdom.

**8. JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS: TACKLING COVID-19 DISINFORMATION – GETTING THE FACTS RIGHT
(JOIN(2020) 8 TO /3; RCC(2020) 85)**

Ms JOUROVÀ presented to the College the Joint Communication on ‘Tackling COVID-19 disinformation – Getting the facts right’, which was tabled for approval by the Commission.

She reiterated that the PRESIDENT had made the fight against disinformation a priority in order to protect European democracies. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the health sector had for the first time been affected by large-scale disinformation campaigns, which had seriously compromised efforts to combat the

disease. These campaigns could damage citizens' health, the functioning of public authorities and the economy. She therefore welcomed the fact that the communication referred to the important role of certain foreign actors in such manipulation, among which she expressly mentioned Russia and China, on the basis of objective evidence.

In this context, she felt it was appropriate for online platforms to allocate sufficient space to public health organisations to enable them to disseminate reliable and scientifically sound information.

The action plan proposed in the communication was also particularly relevant in the current phase of exiting the crisis, at a time when European economies were restarting, but when false or misleading information could hinder this process.

She then highlighted the typical European approach taken in the communication, stressing the need for greater coordination between the Member States and respect for fundamental rights as a key value.

EU action on disinformation had already delivered results, as illustrated by the example of the *Google* search engine, which had blocked or removed more than 80 million advertisements related to the coronavirus (worldwide) and that of *eBay*, which had blocked or removed more than 17 million registrations infringing Union rules on the protection of consumers on its global market.

Nevertheless, Ms JOUROVÁ noted that the actions implemented would not be sufficient, as the root causes, channels and targets of the phenomenon of disinformation were numerous and constantly evolving. For that reason, the Commission was today proposing only short-term measures until its wider initiatives, primarily the European Democracy Action Plan and digital services legislation, were adopted later in the year.

Although the EU was no longer starting from scratch, thanks in particular to its Action Plan against Disinformation of 2018, the wave of disinformation related to

COVID-19 had shown that the Union needed to strengthen its monitoring and analysis of the phenomenon.

The Union would therefore have to work on many fronts and with all sections of society, which was why the communication was structured around six main components: (i) the need to develop strategic communication, a need revealed by the communication difficulties which the Union had encountered in conveying its message of support to the Member States and neighbouring countries, (ii) stepping up cooperation within the Union, in close cooperation with the other institutions, and making the best use, with the Member States, of existing frameworks such as the Rapid Alert System or the European cooperation network on elections, (iii) intensifying the Union's cooperation with its international partners such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the G7, (iv) cooperation with online platforms, which were being asked to provide greater transparency and access to research and analysis data, (v) the emphasis to be placed on fact-checking by establishing a network and infrastructure enabling systematic verification, and (vi) protecting freedom of expression and media pluralism, chiefly through support for the media, journalists and civil society, in cooperation with the Member States.

Ms JOUROVÀ also warned against losing sight of citizens, who had to learn to distinguish between falsehoods and verified information and not to believe the former, thanks to general education and media literacy, which encouraged critical thinking and gave them the means to become empowered and take action.

Finally, she drew attention to the consumer protection aspects of the communication, which were justified by the fact that the pandemic had created fertile ground for fraud and misleading advertising.

She ended by stating that the communication was merely a first step in the Commission's strategy to address the phenomenon of disinformation.

Mr BORRELL reminded the meeting that the communication reflected the mandate given to the Commission by the EU leaders in March 2020 to draw lessons from the

disinformation acts and campaigns observed during the pandemic and draw up an action plan to combat this phenomenon. He stressed the Member States' interest in taking action on these issues and noted that the European Council in March 2015 had asked the European External Action Service to set up the Task Forces on strategic communication for Eastern Europe in order to counter attempts at destabilisation and cyber-attacks originating notably from Russia. Since then, a number of strategic communication Task Forces had been set up to cover other parts of the world and the resources assigned to these by the Union had increased, but still fell short when compared with the magnitude of the challenges abundantly financed by the instigators of disinformation campaigns.

In addition, during the crisis the Union had stepped up its efforts to inform citizens about the risks of disinformation and to improve cooperation with other international actors in order to guard against it. In particular, the rebuttals of myths around the coronavirus published by the Commission had been viewed more than 7 million times. Moreover, the European External Action Service had strengthened its strategic communication and public diplomacy in third countries, particularly those in the EU's neighbourhood, at a time when foreign actors and certain third countries, in particular Russia and China, had been launching targeted influence operations and disinformation campaigns in the Union. Hence the usefulness of the Union's Rapid Alert System, which enabled coordinated action by all the Member States and cooperation with international organisations such as the G7 and NATO.

Mr BORRELL ended his intervention by stating that the fight against disinformation required close cooperation with civil society and the private sector, which should be made more aware of the widespread presence of fake news and more critical through appropriate media literacy measures.

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

- the increased vulnerability of society to disinformation in the context of the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- the importance of the European Union’s approach to disinformation taking account of the influence that false or misleading information might have on the financial markets and, more broadly, the economy;
- the need to equip the European Union to counter disinformation and the attention to be afforded to this end to the funding that would be allocated over the coming years to the various working groups in charge of strategic communication;
- the support to be provided to independent media and to media literacy initiatives for all groups within society and all age ranges;
- the advantage of pursuing international cooperation and involving all those concerned, as disinformation was not held back by borders and was now of concern to all countries;
- the usefulness of the work of the newly established European Digital Media Observatory, which should enable the EU to step up its support yet further to fact-checkers and researchers;
- the considerable expertise acquired by the Commission’s departments because of the pandemic with respect to consumer protection and tackling abuses and misleading advertising;
- the importance, in this respect, of learning to distinguish lawful content from unlawful content in order to establish the facts and fight fraud effectively;
- the attention to be afforded to protecting freedom of expression, especially within the context of elections, which, however, raised the sensitive issue of the role to be played by EU institutions within the framework of political debate at national level;

- the need to take account of proven sources of disinformation, especially from abroad and certain non-EU countries, which had launched targeted influence operations and disinformation campaigns in the EU in the past;
- reference to the opportunity represented by the consultations launched in the context of preparing legislation on digital services, which should enable all players to contribute and to define better the role of online platforms in combating disinformation;
- the constructive nature of the dialogue that the Commission had established with the major online platforms;
- the advantage of online platforms providing monthly reports containing more detailed data on the measures taken to encourage content provided by authoritative sources, to raise the awareness of users and to limit disinformation concerning the coronavirus and the related advertising;
- the importance, also, of online platforms stepping up their cooperation with fact-checkers and researchers, and of being more transparent about the implementation of their policies to inform users who encountered disinformation;
- the priority to be given to young people, who needed to be made aware of disinformation in order to acquire the tools to distinguish truth from falsehood on online platforms and to show critical thinking;
- the advisability of considering measures to protect children from disinformation online within the framework of preparing a strategy to protect children's rights;
- the relevance of the forthcoming conference on the future of Europe to engage in a dialogue with citizens and involve them in the fight against disinformation;

- the multifaceted nature of disinformation, which required the material and financial means commensurate with the extent of the phenomenon and the risks it engendered;
- consequently, the importance of the European Union adapting its tools to changes in disinformation techniques, such as micro-targeted attacks, the most recent development;
- a reminder of the wide array of European Union programmes which contribute towards combating disinformation, *inter alia*, Horizon 2020, the Digital Education Action Plan, Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps.

The PRESIDENT wound up the discussion by confirming that the Communication was but one part of a gradual overall approach to countering disinformation devised by the European Union. The measures proposed that day would support future work by the EU on disinformation, in particular an action plan for European democracy and legislation on digital services. She considered it important for the strategy and actions of the European Union to counter disinformation to be grounded in fundamental rights, in particular freedom of expression and information.

The Commission approved the Joint Communication in JOIN(2020) 8/3 for transmission to Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments.

9. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

9.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2020) 207 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 1 and 5 June 2020.

9.2. EMPOWERMENT**(SEC(2020) 208 ET SEQ.)**

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 1 and 5 June 2020.

9.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS**(SEC(2020) 209 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 June 2020 archived in Decide.

9.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES**(SEC(2020) 210 AND /2)**

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 8 and 12 May 2020.

Communication from the Commission on the third assessment of the application of the temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU – COM(2020) 399 – PE/2020/3971

Communication from the Commission on guidance for a phased and coordinated resumption of visa operations – C(2020) 3999 – PE/2020/3970

At the invitation of the PRESIDENT, Ms JOHANSSON gave an update on the situation at the EU's internal and external borders following the introduction of temporary controls and restrictions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, with regard to the situation at the internal borders, she reminded the meeting that from mid-March onwards, 17 countries – 14 Member States and 3 Schengen Associated Countries – had notified the temporary reintroduction

of internal border controls because of the COVID-19 pandemic. She explained that, according to the information provided by the Home Affairs Ministers at their informal meeting held on 5 June 2020, 4 countries would completely lift the controls by 15 June and, by the same date, the controls would be partially lifted in 9 countries. 2 countries indicated to lift the controls completely by 21 June and 2 countries had not yet made a formal decision.

Furthermore, the positively developing epidemiological situation in the Union and the widespread use of supporting measures such as physical distancing meant that the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control was in favour of a rapid lifting of internal border controls, as it considered them to be ineffective in the current situation.

Given these circumstances, Ms JOHANSSON explained that it was justified and necessary to call on the Member States to lift internal border controls as soon as possible, and at the latest by 30 June.

With regard to the restrictions at the external borders, she noted that mid-March the Commission had invited the Heads of State or Government to introduce a temporary restriction on non-essential travel to the EU for an initial period of 30 days. This was later extended, first to 15 May and then to 15 June, in order to reduce the risk of the disease being spread by travel to the EU.

She also reminded the meeting that, in accordance with the Joint Roadmap presented by the Commission on 15 April 2020, in cooperation with the President of the European Council, with a view to gradually lifting containment measures linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, the restrictions at external borders were to be relaxed in a second phase, following the coordinated lifting of controls at the internal borders, and based on the situation outside the Union with regard to the spread of the virus.

She therefore proposed that the restrictions at the external borders be maintained until the end of June to allow for this two-phased approach, taking account of the planned timetable for lifting controls at the internal borders.

She then stated that it was imperative to ensure that the restrictions were lifted not only in a coordinated manner, in view of the risk of the reintroduction of internal border controls, but also gradually, since the virus was still very active in certain third countries that were now the epicentre of the epidemic.

The delicate process to be undertaken with the Member States to determine the third countries for which the restrictions could be gradually lifted would need to comply with the principles of non-discrimination and reciprocity, and would need to use similar objective criteria to those guiding the gradual and coordinated lifting of controls at the internal borders. She referred in particular to the epidemiological situation in those third countries and the supporting measures that had been put in place there, and the need to provide for the possibility to reserve the lifting of the restrictions if necessary.

She indicated that the Western Balkans should be included on the first list of third countries for which travel restrictions could be lifted from 1 July.

Lastly, Ms JOHANSSON highlighted the immediate effects of these measures on the resumption of visa procedures.

She drew the College's attention to the fact that the internal and external border management issues to which she had just referred and the visa-related measures would be addressed in two communications to be adopted by urgent written procedure, the deadline for which was set at 11.00 on Thursday 11 June 2020 (COM(2020) 399 – PE/2020/3971; C(2020) 3999 – PE/2020/3970).

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

- the need for a coordinated approach to the lifting of restrictions at the external borders;
- support for the proposal to include the Western Balkans amongst the first third countries for which travel restrictions could be lifted;
- the merits of a short extension to the restrictions on non-essential travel from third countries to the EU given the incubation period for coronavirus and the expected date for lifting controls at the internal borders;
- an appeal to make the lifting of restrictions at the external borders conditional on the third countries concerned submitting reliable data and a call for the greatest possible vigilance in that regard;
- the observation that, since the informal meeting of Home Affairs Ministers held on 5 June, Hungary had lifted controls at its internal borders;
- the need to issue a reminder that, following a great deal of work, on 12 June the technical specifications were due to be approved for a decentralised tracing system that would allow citizens to use the tracing app wherever they were in the EU; the considerable progress this new possibility represented and a reference to the efforts made to extend the app to third countries;
- information on the implications of crew changes with regard to visa management and the need to ensure that seafarers from the EU and from third countries could return to their countries of origin or board vessels for new voyages at ports in the EU and in third countries.

The PRESIDENT welcomed the sound approach being proposed to address the sensitive matter of lifting controls and restrictions at the EU's borders.

She also invited Ms VESTAGER to inform the College in the near future about the tracing app referred to during the discussion.

The Commission took note of this information.

10. OTHER BUSINESS

10.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Mr BORRELL gave a quick overview of the latest developments in the field of external action.

He began by referring briefly to the preparation for the next meeting of Foreign Affairs ministers to be held by videoconference on 15 June, which would be attended by the U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo. The meeting would concentrate on transatlantic relations, relations with China and the peace process in the Middle East. In order to ensure that discussions with their American guest were as useful and effective as possible, he wished the interventions by the ministers of the Member States to be structured in such a way as to convey a focused set of messages.

He also referred to the meeting of EU defence ministers on 16 June next, ahead of which four Member States had called for increased EU action in the field of defence.

He then turned to the Sahel and Libya, observing that the situation had deteriorated in both regions and summarising recent developments there.

He outlined the state of play with respect to Operation Irini, which had been launched with the primary objective of ensuring compliance with the embargo put in place by the United Nations (UN) on the sale of arms to Libya, but also of contributing to the implementation of UN measures to prevent the illegal export of Libyan oil. He pointed out that the resources available to this

Operation had been very limited to date, but reported that it had already proved useful in preventing oil smuggling attempts and was actively hailing suspect vessels thereby offering active deterrence against arms trafficking.

More generally, he took note of the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Union's missions and operations in the world.

Lastly, Mr BORRELL expressed growing concern about the situation in Brazil, where the COVID-19 crisis was having devastating effects, including in political terms.

In this connection, Ms URPILAINEN reported that the package of measures proposed by the Union to combat the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide and to assist partner countries had mobilised EUR 36 billion, instead of the EUR 20 billion expected. She welcomed this display of solidarity initiated by the Union.

The Commission took note of this information.

10.2. FIGHT AGAINST RACISM

To close the meeting, the PRESIDENT announced her decision to hold a College policy debate on 24 June on the fight against racism, in the wake of the mass protests that had taken place in the United States and around the world. She wanted the debate to be structured and to focus on the added value that the European level could bring to action to combat this phenomenon, which concerned all citizens, by using existing instruments to best effect.

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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 11.03.