



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2020) 2347 final

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

Brussels, 9 September 2020

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

**of the 2347th meeting of the Commission
held in Brussels
(Berlaymont)
on Friday 24 July 2020
(morning)**

PV(2020) 2347 final

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

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Single sitting: Friday 24 July 2020 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.07 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 17
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	
Ms GABRIEL	Member	
Mr SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	

Absent:

Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President
Mr HOGAN	Member
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Ms URPILAINEN	Member
Ms SIMSON	Member

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

Ms CANENBLEY	Deputy Chef de cabinet to Ms VESTAGER	
Mr POWER	Chef de cabinet to Mr HOGAN	Items 1 to 12/17 (in part)
Mr REIG RODRIGO	A member of Ms KYRIAKIDES's staff	
Mr KRISTÓFFY	Chef de cabinet to Mr VÁRHELYI	
Mr SAVIGNAT	A member of Ms URPILAINEN's staff	
Mr GRASSI	Chef de cabinet to Ms SIMSON	

The following also sat in:

Mr SEIBERT	Chef de cabinet to the PRESIDENT	
Mr CALLEJA CRESPO	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 FLOSDORFF	Executive Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 8 to 18
Ms PETKOVA	Director of Coordination and Administration in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 1 to 7
Ms HILI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 8 to 11
Ms TOVSAK-PLETESKI	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 12 to 17
Ms VILA NUÑEZ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Ms SPANOU	Chef de cabinet to Mr SCHINAS	Items 8 to 11
Ms WEBBER	Chef de cabinet to Ms JOHANSSON	Items 8 to 11
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Secretariat-General	
Mr HEMMELGARN	Secretariat-General	

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

1. AGENDA (OJ(2020) 2347/FINAL)

The Commission took note of that day's agenda.

**2. WEEKLY MEETING OF CHEFS DE CABINET
(RCC(2020) 2347)**

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Wednesday 22 July 2020.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE 2344TH, 2345TH AND
2346TH MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (1, 8 AND 15 JULY 2020)
(PV(2020) 2344; PV(2020) 2344, 2ND PART)**

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2344th meeting, and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2345th and 2346th meetings until a later meeting.

**4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(RCC(2020) 129)**

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 17 July 2020 (RCC(2020) 129).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. HORIZONTAL ITEM

- i) Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 – Trilogues**
(point 1.1.1 of the IRG record)

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- Common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum and Migration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Border Management and Visa Instrument (Regulation) – NOVAKOV report – 2018/0196 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 232/2.

- European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund (Regulation) – COZZOLINO report – 2018/0197 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 233/3.

- Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 as regards exceptional additional resources and implementing arrangements under the ‘Investment for growth and jobs’ goal to provide assistance for fostering crisis repair in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and preparing a green, digital and resilient recovery of the economy (REACT-EU) (Regulation) – NOVAKOV report – 2020/0101 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 234/2.

- European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) (Regulation) – CASA report – 2018/0206 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 229.

- Establishment of a Technical Support Instrument (Regulation) – KARAS, PÎSLARU & GEESE report – 2020/0103 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 230.

- Asylum and Migration Fund (Regulation) – DALLI report – 2018/0248 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 237/2.

ii) Additional draft texts on the draft Agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom on the Future Partnership – Law enforcement and judicial cooperation in criminal matters – Guidelines for arrangements on the recognition of professional qualifications

(point 1.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission took note of the information in SI(2020) 231 and /2.

iii) Commission Work Programme 2020 – Withdrawal of pending proposals – Publication of the list of withdrawals in the Official Journal of the European Union

(point 1.3 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved the line set out in SPI(2020) 23.

4.2. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

iv) Results of Parliament's July 2020 part-session

(point 5.8.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission took note of the information on Parliament's part-session held from 8 to 10 July 2020 in Brussels, set out in SP(2020) 284/2.

**5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION
(RCC(2020) 99)**

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2020) 99 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held on Wednesday 15 July 2020.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED

(SEC(2020) 252 ET SEQ.)

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

6.2. EMPOWERMENT

(SEC(2020) 253 ET SEQ.)

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

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS

(SEC(2020) 254 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 July 2020 archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES

(SEC(2020) 255 AND /2)

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

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS

(SEC(2020) 256/2 AND /3)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

(PERS(2020) 61/2 AND /3)

At the PRESIDENT's invitation, Mr HAHN presented seven additional proposals for administrative decisions which were tabled directly to the College for approval.

First, Mr HAHN explained that it was proposed to appoint Mr Gerassimos THOMAS, formerly Deputy Director-General in DG Energy and currently Deputy Minister for the Environment and Energy in the Greek Government, to the post of Director-General of DG Taxation and Customs Union.

Second, there was a proposal to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Florika FINK-HOOIJER, currently Director-General of DG Interpretation, to the post of Director-General of DG Environment.

The third proposal was to appoint Mr Denis REDONNET to the post of Deputy Director-General – Chief Trade Enforcement Officer (in charge of Directorates F and G) in DG Trade.

Mr HAHN highlighted the great skills, outstanding career and recognised expertise of Mr Gerassimos THOMAS, Ms Florika FINK-HOOIJER and Mr Denis REDONNET, which would be valuable assets in their new posts.

Fourth, Mr HAHN explained that, in the context of the creation and implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility under the NextGenerationEU recovery plan drawn up by the Commission in response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, it was proposed to set up a Recovery and Resilience Task Force ('RECOVER') within the Secretariat-General for an initial duration of 12 months and to amend the organisation chart of the Secretariat-General accordingly. It was proposed that Ms Céline GAUER, currently Deputy Secretary-General, would take up the post of acting Head of RECOVER from the date when the creation of the Task Force took effect until its Head was appointed and took up post; the post would be filled at Director-General level and the holder would be assisted by a principal adviser.

Mr HAHN said that RECOVER would report directly to the PRESIDENT, who would chair a Steering Board comprising the three Executive Vice-Presidents, the Member of the Commission responsible for the Economy, the Secretary-General

and a representative of DG Economic and Financial Affairs. Mr DOMBROVSKIS would have the task of reporting to the College on the work of the Steering Board.

RECOVER would have two directorates, each of which would have three units, all based in Brussels.

The fifth and sixth proposals were therefore to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Eric VON BRESKA, currently Director of the 'Policy' Directorate in DG Regional and Urban Policy, to the post of Director of the 'RECOVER.A – Recovery & Resilience I' Directorate in the Secretariat-General, and Ms Maria Teresa FABREGAS FERNANDEZ, currently Director of the 'Indirect Taxation and Tax Administration' Directorate in DG Taxation and Customs Union, to the post of Director of the 'RECOVER.B – Recovery & Resilience II' Directorate in the Secretariat-General.

The seventh and last proposal was to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Marcel HAAG, currently Director of the 'Jobs, Growth and Investment' Directorate in the Secretariat-General, to the post of Director of the 'Horizontal Policies' Directorate in DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union.

**7.1. DG TAXATION AND CUSTOMS UNION – APPOINTMENT OF AD15/16
DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2020) 34 TO /4)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Director-General of DG Taxation and Customs Union (PERS(2020) 34 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 23 and 26 June 2020 (PERS(2020) 34/3 and /4).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and

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after consulting Mr GENTILONI, it then decided to appoint Mr Gerassimos THOMAS to the post.

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

7.2. DG ENVIRONMENT – APPOINTMENT OF AD15 DIRECTOR-GENERAL

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr SINKEVIČIUS, the Commission decided to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Florika FINK-HOOIJER, an AD15 official and currently Director-General of DG Interpretation, to the post of Director-General of DG Environment.

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

**7.3. DG TRADE – APPOINTMENT OF AD 15/16 DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2020) 68 TO /3)**

The Commission had before it applications under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations for the post of Deputy Director-General – Chief Trade Enforcement Officer (in charge of Directorates F and G) in DG Trade (PERS(2020) 68).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 18 May and 15 July 2020 (PERS(2020) 68/2 and /3).

The Commission proceeded to compare the applicants' qualifications for the post. On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr HOGAN, it then decided to appoint Mr Denis REDONNET to the post.

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

7.4. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL / DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – CREATION OF THE RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE TASK FORCE ('RECOVER'), AND AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART OF THE SECRETARIAT- GENERAL (PERS(2020) 71; SEC(2020) 283)

The Commission took note of the information at point 4 of PERS(2020) 61/3 and, in the context of the creation and implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility under the NextGenerationEU recovery plan proposed by the Commission in response to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, it decided to take the following measures:

- to create a Recovery and Resilience Task Force (RECOVER) within the Secretariat-General for an initial duration of 12 months, and to approve the new organisation chart of the Secretariat-General set out in SEC(2020) 283;
- to appoint, in accordance with Article 27(1) of the Commission's Rules of Procedure (C(2010) 1200 of 24 February 2010), Ms Céline GAUER, Deputy Secretary-General, as acting Head of the RECOVER Task Force, from the date when its creation took effect until the Head of the Task Force was appointed and took up post;
- to publish internally the vacancy notice for the post of Head of the RECOVER Task Force set out in PERS(2020) 71;
- RECOVER would work in close cooperation with DG Economic and Financial Affairs in order to:
 - coordinate support to the Member States in drawing up their recovery and resilience plans;

- ensure, together with the Member States, that the notified plans complied with the regulatory requirements laid down in the legislation and in particular that they delivered on the objectives of the twin green and digital transitions and of recovery and resilience;
- draw up the implementing acts needed for approval of the plans;
- assess the progress made by the Member States in implementing the plans and analyse the periodic reports provided for by the legislation;
- coordinate the European Semester during this period;
- RECOVER would report directly to the PRESIDENT of the Commission; the PRESIDENT would chair a Steering Board comprising the three Executive Vice-Presidents, representing their clusters, the Member of the Commission responsible for the Economy, the Secretary-General and a representative of DG Economic and Financial Affairs; Mr DOMBROVSKIS, Executive Vice-President, would report to the College;
- RECOVER would be headed by a Director-General; it would consist of two directorates, each of which would have three units; the Head of the Task Force would be assisted by a principal adviser; the maximum total number of staff would be 81 FTE (10 AST and 71 AD); RECOVER would be based in Brussels;
- With regard to the staff members of RECOVER, the Secretary-General would exercise the powers conferred on the Director-General concerned by the Commission decisions applicable to the appointing authority and the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment;
- The Secretariat-General would provide all the necessary support functions for RECOVER, such as human resources, planning and programming, budget, internal control, the drafting of annual activity reports and

communication; the Secretary-General would be authorising officer by delegation for RECOVER;

- the European Semester Officers would be attached to the Secretariat-General, while remaining assigned for administrative purposes to DG Communication and retaining their posts in the representations and their place of employment in the respective Member State; where necessary for its smooth functioning, RECOVER would be able to establish direct operational reporting lines to other members of staff in Commission Directorates-General and departments;
- by derogation from the current Commission rules, listed below, and to ensure the rapid establishment and efficient operation of the RECOVER Task Force, the PRESIDENT was authorised to depart, where necessary, from certain provisions of Commission Decisions, including on publication, selection, justification for using temporary staff, maximum duration of employment, advisers, grading, minimum length of employment with the current employer in the case of seconded national experts, fees paid to special advisers, maximum period since retirement and restrictions with regard to assignments or tasks and remuneration in the case of retired officials: (1) Decision C(2008) 6866 of 12 November 2008 laying down rules on the secondment to the Commission of national experts and national experts in professional training, as amended; (2) 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; (3) Decision C(2013) 9049 of 16 December 2013 on policies for the engagement and use of temporary agents; (4) Decision C(2019) 2548 of 5 April 2019 on the maximum duration for the recourse to non-permanent staff in the Commission services; (5) Decision C(2018) 4048 of 29 June 2018 on

outside activities and assignments and on occupational activities after leaving the Service; (6) Communication C(2017) 5231 of 31 July 2017 on organisation charts of Commission DGs and services; (7) Communication C(2007) 6655 of 19 December 2007 on the rules on special advisers to the Commission; (8) Decision C(2016) 3214 of 7 June 2016 concerning the function of adviser; and (9) Decision C(2013) 8979 of 16 December 2013 on types of post and post titles.

After the restructuring, the total number of directorates in the Secretariat-General would increase from 9 to 10, and the number of units would increase from 31 to 37.

These decisions would take effect on 16 August 2020, except for the attachment of European Semester Officers, which would take effect at a date to be determined later by simplified procedure. Following the abolition of Directorate D, the current Directorates E, F, G and H of the Secretariat-General would be renamed on 1 November 2020.

7.5. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – APPOINTMENT OF AD14 DIRECTOR

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms FERREIRA, the Commission decided to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Eric VON BRESKA, an AD14 official and currently Director of the ‘Policy’ Directorate in DG Regional and Urban Policy, to the post of Director of the ‘RECOVER.A – Recovery & Resilience I’ Directorate in the Secretariat-General.

This decision would take effect on 16 August 2020.

7.6. SECRETARIAT-GENERAL – APPOINTMENT OF AD14 DIRECTOR

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr GENTILONI, the Commission decided to transfer in the

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interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Maria Teresa FABREGAS FERNANDEZ, an AD14 official and currently Director of the ‘Indirect Taxation and Tax Administration Directorate’ in DG Taxation and Customs Union, to the post of Director of the ‘RECOVER.B – Recovery & Resilience II’ Directorate in the Secretariat-General.

This decision would take effect on 16 August 2020.

7.7. DG FINANCIAL STABILITY, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND CAPITAL MARKETS UNION – APPOINTMENT OF AD15 DIRECTOR

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Mr DOMBROVSKIS, the Commission decided to transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Marcel HAAG, an AD15 official and currently Director of the ‘Jobs, Growth & Investment’ Directorate in the Secretariat-General, to the post of Director of the ‘Horizontal Policies’ Directorate in DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union.

This decision would take effect on 16 August 2020.

7.8. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – APPOINTMENT OF AD14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2020) 67 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 ‘Food chain: stakeholder and international relations’ Directorate in the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety (PERS(2020) 67).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 26 May and 18 June 2020 (PERS(2020) 67/2 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 KYRIAKIDES, it then decided to appoint Ms Nathalie CHAZE to the post.

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

**7.9. DG MOBILITY AND TRANSPORT – APPOINTMENT OF AD14/15
DIRECTOR
(PERS(2020) 58 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 ‘Shared Resource Directorate MOVE/ENER’ in DG Mobility and Transport (PERS(2020) 58).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 12 June and 9 July 2020 (PERS(2020) 58/2 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 VĂLEAN and Ms SIMSON, it then decided to appoint Ms Anne MONTAGNON to the post.

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

**7.10. DG REGIONAL AND URBAN POLICY – EXTENSION OF THE
SECONDMENT OF AN AD14 OFFICIAL IN THE INTEREST OF THE
SERVICE UNDER ARTICLES 37 AND 38 OF THE STAFF
REGULATIONS**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms FERREIRA, the Commission decided to extend the secondment, in the interest of the service, under Articles 37 and 38 of the Staff Regulations, of Ms Natalija KAZLAUSKIENĖ, an AD14 official, currently Principal Adviser for Policy and Implementation in DG Regional

and Urban Policy, to the Cabinet Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, for a period ending on 31 January 2022 at the latest.

This decision would take effect on 1 September 2020.

7.11. LEGAL SERVICE – RESIGNATION OF AN AD14 OFFICIAL UNDER ARTICLE 48 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

The Commission decided to accept, pursuant to Article 48 of the Staff Regulations, the resignation of Mr Viktor SOLOVEYTCHIK, currently on leave on personal grounds under Article 40 of the Staff Regulations and formerly Principal Legal Adviser in the Legal Service, with effect from 7 July 2020.

7.12. DG HUMAN RESOURCES AND SECURITY – APPROVAL OF LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR HEAD OF EUROPEAN UNION DELEGATION POSTS IN BENIN AND BOLIVIA, AND A DEPUTY HEAD OF DELEGATION POST IN LEBANON AT GRADE AD9/14 (PERS(2020) 70)

The Commission took note of the information in point 5 of PERS(2020) 61/2 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided to approve the lists of candidates in PERS(2020) 70 for the posts of Head of the European Union Delegations to Benin and Bolivia and Deputy Head of the European Union Delegation to Lebanon (at grade AD9-14); 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.

**7.13. DG COMMUNICATION NETWORKS, CONTENT AND TECHNOLOGY
– TEMPORARY APPOINTMENT AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
EUROPEAN HIGH-PERFORMANCE COMPUTING JOINT
UNDERTAKING (EuroHPC JU)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 6 of PERS(2020) 61/2 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, and after consulting Ms VESTAGER, decided to appoint Mr Jean-François BUGGENHOUT, Head of the ‘Flagships’ Unit in DG Communications Networks, Content and Technology, to perform temporarily the duties of Executive Director of the European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking (EuroHPC JU) until the Executive Director took up post.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.14. DG DEFENCE INDUSTRY AND SPACE – LIST OF CANDIDATES FOR
THE AD14 POST OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN
GLOBAL NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEMS AGENCY (GSA)
(PERS(2020) 48 TO /3)**

The Commission took note of the information set out in point 7 of PERS(2020) 61/2 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr BRETON, decided:

- to approve the list of one candidate, for the post of Executive Director of the European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Agency (GSA), and to consider this list as the Commission proposal;
- to ask Mr BRETON, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this list to the Administrative Board of the European Global Navigation Satellite Systems Agency (GSA).

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.15. DG ENERGY – EXTENSION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE AD15 DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN JOINT UNDERTAKING FOR ITER AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF FUSION ENERGY (F4E JU)

The Commission took note of the information set out in point 8 of PERS(2020) 61/2 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms SIMSON, decided:

- to propose to the Governing Board of the European Joint Undertaking for ITER and the Development of Fusion Energy (F4E JU) the extension of the term of office of Mr Johannes SCHWEMMER as Director at grade AD15 for a period of three years from 1 January 2021 in accordance with Article 8 of Council Decision 2007/198/Euratom;
- to ask Ms SIMSON, the Member of the Commission responsible, to communicate this decision to the Governing Board of the European Joint Undertaking for ITER and the Development of Fusion Energy (F4E JU).

These decisions would take effect immediately.

7.16. DG JUSTICE AND CONSUMERS – EXTENSION OF THE TERM OF OFFICE OF THE AD15 DIRECTOR OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS (FRA)

The Commission took note of the information set out in point 9 of PERS(2020) 61/2 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Mr REYNDERS, decided:

- to propose to the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights the extension of the term of office of Mr Michael O’FLAHERTY as Director of the Agency at grade AD15 for a period of three years from 16 December 2020 in accordance with Article 15(3) of Council Regulation (EC) No 168/2007;
- to ask Mr REYNDERS, the Member of the Commission responsible, to

communicate this decision to the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.17. DG BUDGET – COMMISSION DECISION ON ESTABLISHING THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON CONTINGENT LIABILITIES ARISING FROM BUDGETARY GUARANTEES
(C(2020) 5154)**

The Commission adopted the decision in C(2020) 5154.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.18. DG BUDGET – COMPLEMENTARY ALLOCATION OF HUMAN RESOURCES FOR 2020
(SEC(2020) 282/2)**

The Commission approved the decision in SEC(2020) 282/2.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.19. COMMISSION DECISIONS ON POST TERM-OF-OFFICE ACTIVITIES OF THREE FORMER MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION
(C(2020) 9032; C(2020) 9033; C(2020) 9034; C(2020) 9035; C(2020) 9036)**

The Commission adopted the Decisions set out in C(2020) 9032, C(2020) 9033, C(2020) 9034, C(2020) 9035 and C(2020) 9036.

The Commission specifically decided that the professional activities envisaged by Mr Miguel ARIAS CAÑETE, Mr Karmenu VELLA and Mr Christos STYLIANIDES after leaving office as Members of the Commission were compatible with Article 245(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and with the Code of Conduct for Commissioners, subject to certain specific conditions and obligations.

8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON THE EU SECURITY UNION STRATEGY

(COM(2020) 605 TO /3; RCC(2020) 134)

9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – EU STRATEGY FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE FIGHT AGAINST CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

(COM(2020) 607 TO /3; RCC(2020) 132)

10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – 2020-2025 EU ACTION PLAN ON FIREARMS TRAFFICKING

(COM(2020) 608 TO /3; RCC(2020) 132)

11. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – EU AGENDA AND ACTION PLAN ON DRUGS 2021-2025

(COM(2020) 606 AND /2; RCC(2020) 132)

At the PRESIDENT's request, Mr SCHINAS presented **the EU Security Union Strategy for 2020-2025** tabled that day for approval by the College, together with the other related proposals. He highlighted the collective work that had gone into this set of initiatives and warmly thanked the Members of the College for their contribution in drawing up a comprehensive and ambitious strategy. Security was a

cross-cutting issue which affected almost every part of society and covered a multitude of policy areas.

He started by emphasising the need for the security strategy in view of the new threats that had emerged as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this strategy the Union would connect all the dots needed to build a real security ecosystem, overcoming the false dichotomy between the digital and physical worlds and between internal and external security. From the protection of our critical infrastructure to countering hybrid threats and fighting cybercrime, no stone had been left unturned to ensure the security of all citizens living in the EU. He stressed the comprehensive and integrated nature of the strategy, which combined prevention, preparedness, detection of threats, resilience, research and innovation.

He referred in particular to the need to review the Union's preparedness for threats of all kinds, particularly those to its critical infrastructure, including in financial services.

Mr SCHINAS felt that the only effective response to the multiple risks currently facing the EU was to strengthen its resilience, in an effort that must involve the whole of society. However, the threats for which we had to prepare were evolving very rapidly. They were unprecedented, particularly aggressive and far removed from any of those facing the world only a few years or even months ago. Among others, he cited the cyber attacks against hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic.

He therefore welcomed the fact that the Strategy's umbrella framework brought together all aspects of security and translated them into concrete measures in order to meet four fundamental priorities: (i) creating a future-proof security environment, (ii) tackling evolving threats, (iii) protecting Europeans from terrorism and organised crime, and (iv) creating a strong European security ecosystem.

He was proud that the present Commission was that day writing the first chapter of a wave of proposals that would mark the whole of its term of office and strengthen all aspects of EU security. He explained that the strategy proposed that day

deliberately avoided the traditional dichotomy between security and the right to privacy, which was not appropriate in the overall strategy but would be taken into account in future legislative proposals.

In conclusion, Mr SCHINAS announced that, following the practice set by the previous College, the Commission would resume the publication of regular reports on the progress made in implementing the Security Union.

Ms JOHANSSON presented the three documents accompanying the overall Security Strategy. These were (i) a strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse, (ii) a new action plan on drugs and (iii) a new action plan on firearms trafficking.

With regard to **the Strategy for a more effective fight against child sexual abuse**, she explained that according to estimates, one in five children was the victim of some form of sexual violence in Europe and the phenomenon was growing exponentially, since the number of child sexual abuses committed in the Union had increased from 23 000 in 2010 to over 725 000 in 2019. She added that Europol had noted a correlation between the coronavirus pandemic and the increased sharing of online images of abuse, something that was particularly difficult to investigate.

In order to rapidly supplement the measures and activities deployed by the EU to protect children from sexual abuse and address new challenges such as the unforeseen risks of end-to-end encryption, the Commission was proposing to act in both the online and offline environments.

Ms JOHANSSON said that several initiatives were therefore planned for the period from 2020 to 2025. The first of these focused on prevention, by setting up a prevention network, encouraging closer links between research and practical applications, and targeted awareness-raising campaigns. Other measures related to establishing a robust legal framework comprising the full implementation of existing legislation on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and new provisions, in particular requiring online service providers to

detect and report known child sexual abuse content to the public authorities. A third group of measures was aimed at strengthening the capacity of law enforcement authorities, in particular through an innovation hub and laboratory to be set up by Europol, the possible creation of a European Centre to counter child sexual abuse, and financial resources to develop the law enforcement authorities' digital capabilities in the Member States. Lastly, the Commission proposed extending cooperation at international level through the WePROTECT Global Alliance to end child sexual exploitation online.

On the **new EU Agenda and Action Plan on drugs 2021-2025**, Ms JOHANSSON gave an idea of the scale of the problem to be addressed, observing that the estimated annual retail value of the illicit drug market was EUR 30 billion in Europe, with a huge social cost in terms of lives, livelihoods and public health as well as a considerable impact in terms of increasing corruption. She added that from being a consumption area, the Union had in a few years become an area of production, in particular of synthetic drugs, which were now exported throughout the world.

She highlighted the Agenda's priorities for the next five years, through 53 specific measures providing for (i) enhanced security measures focused on all aspects of illicit trafficking in drugs, from organised crime groups to external border management, as well as illicit distribution and production, (ii) better prevention and measures to raise awareness of the adverse effects of drugs, including the link between consumption, violence and other forms of criminality, and (iii) combating drug-related harm through access to treatment, risk and harm reduction and a balanced approach to the fight against drugs in prisons.

Lastly, Ms JOHANSSON presented **the new Action Plan on firearms trafficking**. Here too she used a figure to illustrate the scale of the issue, citing the 35 million illicit firearms owned by civilians in the EU according to 2017 estimates. The proliferation and availability of illicit firearms increased the risk of serious and organised crime, including terrorist acts, and were often linked to illicit drug trafficking and other forms of trafficking. The Commission was therefore proposing

a joint action plan for the EU and its partners in South-East Europe – the Western Balkans, Moldova and Ukraine – in order to guarantee the legal framework for reducing the risk of diversion of firearms to the black market, improve knowledge of the threat by addressing the lack of comparable statistics on events linked to firearms and seizures of firearms across the Union, and step up application of the legislation to stop traffickers.

The PRESIDENT then gave the floor to Mr BRETON and invited him to present to the College the main points of the report on progress on implementing the EU toolbox and strengthening the security of 5G networks that the Member States were publishing that day with the support of the European Commission and the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA).

Mr BRETON explained that it was very important to ensure a high level of security when rolling out 5G networks in the Union in view of the growing needs of EU economies for digital infrastructure, as demonstrated by the coronavirus crisis. It was necessary not only to ensure 5G cybersecurity but also to increase the Union's technological autonomy. These objectives could be achieved only through a secure architecture of the Union's digital space and information space. In view of the vulnerabilities of the technologies involved, the integrity of telecommunication networks was the cornerstone of that architecture.

He felt that guaranteeing the resilience of 5G networks was essential for society, since this technology would have an impact not only on digital communications but also on critical sectors such as energy, transport, banking and health, as well as on industrial control systems.

He announced that work was under way for the Union to present a Cybersecurity Strategy at the end of 2020 as part of the review of the Directive on security of network and information systems, as well as operational measures.

Mr BRETON said that according to the report published that day, the work of the Member States had made good progress on the toolbox to strengthen the security of

their infrastructure. This is in particular important for three major areas – digital clouds, satellite interconnectivity and land infrastructure. In this long-term task, he stressed in particular the need for the Member States to align their positions with regard to high-risk providers. He pointed out that the EU's security was only as strong as its weakest link, and welcomed the fact that good progress was being made.

The PRESIDENT also invited Mr ŠEFČOVIČ to briefly present his information letter on the foresight work carried out under his authority, in this case in the field of security.

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ reminded the meeting that the purpose of this document was to provide the Members of the College with information, figures and trends as background for their communication activities. This edition drew lessons from recent cyber attacks, which suggested that criminals were now setting their sights on internet communications. These cyber attacks, which came from countries outside the Union intent on harming it, were meticulously planned. Finally, he noted the emergence of national forms of internet, as in the case of Russia. He therefore urged the Union to counter these abuses through a clear strategy by reconciling its sovereignty in cyberspace with globalisation.

He illustrated the huge challenge facing the Union in order to combat cybercrime by referring to its cost, estimated at EUR 5.5 trillion in 2020, which he described as the largest transfer of wealth in history.

In terms of critical infrastructure, he reiterated that 99% of data exchanges were sent via underwater cables at the bottom of the Atlantic, the ownership of which was highly complex. In his opinion, this was an issue that needed to be raised.

He also cited the terrorist threat and stressed that the best way to combat it was through prevention. It was important to integrate cyberprotection and security from the design stage ('security by design').

Mr ŠEFČOVIČ ended by drawing attention to the fact that two thirds of shipping passing through the Suez Canal would be diverted to the sea route now open in the Arctic Ocean and part of Russia's Exclusive Economic Zone.

During the detailed exchange of views that followed, the Commission raised the following main points:

- support for the proposed Security Union strategy, which provided a very useful and, in some respects, alarming inventory and identified the measures to be put in place;
- recognition of the strategic importance of cybersecurity today, which necessitated overcoming the false dichotomy between internal and external threats by promoting security on both these fronts;
- the observation that many of the threats to the Union's cybersecurity originated from the outside;
- reference to the work undertaken by the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy in close cooperation with the Commission on the Strategic Compass, a political and strategic document aimed at defining the Union's security and defence objectives, identifying threats and giving fresh impetus to initiatives;
- given its strategic importance, the suggestion to raise the issue of digital sovereignty in the PRESIDENT's upcoming State of the Union address;
- the observation that cybersecurity was much more than just a technological option, but a 'societal must', as the report on cybersecurity in the Union, published by the Joint Research Centre a few days earlier, described it;
- therefore, the confirmation of (i) the merits of establishing European strategic priorities for cybersecurity in order to enable the Union to pre-empt and respond to threats as they evolved, (ii) the need to complete the review of the Directive

on security of networks and information systems, the Union's main legislation on cybersecurity to date, and (iii) the usefulness of setting up a joint cybersecurity unit as a platform for structured and coordinated operational cooperation;

- the need to ensure that the decentralised agencies' IT systems met the same high security standards as the institutions' own systems, so as not to leave the Union more vulnerable to cyber attacks;
- more generally, the need to create interoperable Union information systems, particularly in the field of justice and home affairs, and to encourage close cooperation between Union agencies and Member States to this end;
- the correspondence of this strategy with the Union's first-ever strategy on victims' rights presented on 24 June last;
- as the judicial system was the last resort in terms of enforcing rights when preventive measures had fallen short, the importance of ensuring effective legal systems based on qualified and independent judges, in compliance with the requirements of the rule of law, failing which all efforts to combat crime and protect the fundamental rights of individuals would be in vain, as there would be no real possibilities for sanctions or remedies;
- in terms of resources, reference to the digitalisation of the judicial system in order to avoid paralysing legal authorities in situations such as that caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the case for the Member States to include this aspect in their national recovery plans;
- the need to organise secure cross-border data exchanges in order to give the police and judicial authorities the right tools and resources to ensure the protection of individuals and to fight cross-border crime more effectively;
- a reminder, however, of the delicate balance to be maintained between security, which presupposed that law enforcement authorities had access to certain

information, and the protection of privacy, both of which were fundamental rights; a reminder of the terms of this particularly complex balancing act, which were reflected notably in the Council's blocking of the proposal to ensure privacy in electronic communications ('e-privacy') and in the difficulty of starting negotiations on proposals to facilitate access to electronic evidence ('e-evidence');

- the observation that this balancing act was set against a background of tension between internal and external aspects, since the European Court of Justice, in its judgment in *Shrems II* of 16 July 2020, had invalidated the EU-US Privacy Shield, taking the view, inter alia, that data transferred from the Union to the United States were not robustly protected against the possibility of the US public authorities accessing and using them;
- the priority, in the implementation of a Security Union, of combatting child sexual abuse, which had increased significantly in the Union in the space of a few years and was a pressing concern;
- the willingness to assess measures to combat such abuses of fundamental rights;
- the key importance of prevention based on trends and solutions that the work of researchers could help to highlight;
- the need to raise awareness and educate children, who as targets were easy to intimidate and influence, in order to alert them to the risks they faced and teach them how to find trusted partners to whom they could express themselves; in this context, reference in particular to the useful role of Safer Internet Centres.

The PRESIDENT concluded the discussion by emphasising that the set of security proposals presented that day constituted an exceptional body of work.

As regards the Security Union strategy, while it had been difficult in recent years, in the absence of unity, to rally the Member States around the need for a common cybersecurity strategy, the recent attacks could change their way of thinking. Before

presenting in the months ahead a robust strategy to tackle cybercrime, both in terms of the states that sponsored it and the criminal organisations that perpetrated it, a communication campaign was needed to enlist the support of the Member States.

Within the Union's institutions, it was vital to ensure the robustness of the decentralised agencies' IT systems and their compliance with high standards in order to avoid security vulnerabilities. She invited Mr BRETON to address this issue.

On the Action Plan to protect children from sexual abuse, which was a subject very important for the EU and particularly close to her heart, the PRESIDENT recalled her unsuccessful attempt, some 15 years ago as a Minister in Germany, to introduce the blocking of access to child pornography sites. She recognised that, when it came to this type of crime, only the tip of the iceberg was visible; she also stressed however that everyone should get behind this fight, in which lives were literally at stake.

Following this exchange of views, the Commission:

- approved the communication in COM(2020) 605/3 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;
- approved the communications in COM(2020) 606/2, COM(2020) 607/3 and COM(2020) 608/3, 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;

12. PROPOSAL FOR A DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING DIRECTIVE 2014/65/EU AS REGARDS INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS, PRODUCT GOVERNANCE AND

POSITION LIMITS

(COM(2020) 280 TO /3; SWD(2020) 120 AND /2; RCC(2020) 133)

- 13. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2017/1129 AS REGARDS THE EU RECOVERY PROSPECTUS AND TARGETED ADJUSTMENTS FOR FINANCIAL INTERMEDIARIES TO HELP THE RECOVERY FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

(COM(2020) 281 AND /2; SWD(2020) 120 AND /2; RCC(2020) 133)

- 14. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2017/2402 LAYING DOWN A GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR SECURITISATION AND CREATING A SPECIAL FRAMEWORK FOR SIMPLE, TRANSPARENT AND STANDARDISED SECURITISATION TO HELP THE RECOVERY FROM THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

(COM(2020) 282 AND /2; SWD(2020) 120 AND /2; RCC(2020) 133)

- 15. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 575/2013 AS REGARDS ADJUSTMENTS TO THE SECURITISATION FRAMEWORK TO SUPPORT THE ECONOMIC RECOVERY IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

(COM(2020) 283 AND /2; SWD(2020) 120 AND /2; RCC(2020) 133)

- 16. REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL ON THE CREATION OF A SPECIFIC FRAMEWORK FOR SIMPLE, TRANSPARENT AND STANDARDISED SYNTHETIC SECURITISATION, LIMITED TO BALANCE-SHEET SYNTHETIC SECURITISATION**

(COM(2020) 284 AND /2; SWD(2020) 120 AND /2; RCC(2020) 133)

**17. PROPOSAL FOR A REGULATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL AMENDING REGULATION (EU) 2016/1011 AS REGARDS THE EXEMPTION OF CERTAIN THIRD COUNTRY FOREIGN EXCHANGE BENCHMARKS AND THE DESIGNATION OF REPLACEMENT BENCHMARKS FOR CERTAIN BENCHMARKS IN CESSATION
(COM(2020) 337 AND /2; SWD(2020) 142; SWD(2020) 143; SEC(2020) 284)**

Mr DOMBROVSKIS presented a package of measures to the Commissioners for their approval aimed at the contribution of the capital markets to Europe's economic recovery. It consisted of promoting investment in the economy, enabling a rapid restoration of companies' finances and bolstering the capacity of banks to fund the recovery.

He explained that the amendments to legislation put before them rounded out the limited adjustments made to the European Union's banking rules that the Commission had proposed in April, and which had been adopted quickly and are already in force, with a view to rapidly helping the banks to continue to lend money to support the economy and diminish the major economic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. He outlined the major points of the day's legislative proposals.

He began with the targeted amendment to the Prospectus Regulation. The main purpose was to simplify the document which companies had to provide their investors when they issued shares or bonds after a previous issue. The proposal was for the creation on a temporary basis of a shortened prospectus version known as the 'EU Recovery Prospectus', which would be easier to put together for issuers, easier to read for investors and easier to check for the competent national authorities. The measure was intended to help companies remain solvent by rebalancing the relationship between debt and equity.

He then turned to a number of limited amendments made to the MiFID 2 Directive on markets in financial instruments in order to lighten the administrative burden on

experienced investors and thus facilitate the rapid implementation of their investment decisions. They would also improve coverage of small and mid-cap companies by market analysts for their research activities. Furthermore, they would foster the development of euro-denominated energy markets, which was also very important for the euro's international standing.

He then stated that the set of measures before them also provided for targeted adjustments to the regulatory framework applicable to securitisation, the means by which banks package together loans, transform them into tradable securities and sell them in the capital markets. He explained that the aim was to bolster the capacity of banks to lend to households and business by extending the simple, transparent and standardised securitisation mechanism to on-balance-sheet securitisation, which is usually used for business loans, in particular to small and medium-sized companies, and lifting the regulatory obstacles to the securitisation of non-performing loans.

Mr DOMBROVSKIS ended by adding that, in addition to the set of measures he had just presented, there was also a proposal to amend the rules on financial benchmarks in order to include the response to the possibility of the discontinuation of a widely used benchmark, such as had been announced for the London Interbank Offered Rate (LIBOR) by end-2021. This would prevent the legal uncertainty and disruption of the financial markets that it was likely to cause. The proposal was to confer on the Commission, in such an event, the power to designate a replacement benchmark.

In the course of the brief discussion that followed, the Commission noted the appropriateness and adequacy of the set of measures proposed to induce the capital markets rapidly and effectively to action conducive towards a European economic recovery.

Following this presentation, the Commission:

- adopted the proposals put forward in COM(2020) 280/3 and COM(2020) 281/2 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social

Committee and the national parliaments, and, for information, to the European Central Bank, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2020) 120/2, the contents of which were noted;

- adopted the proposals put forward in COM(2020) 282/2 and COM(2020) 283/2 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee and the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2020) 120/2, the contents of which were noted;
- approved the report set out in COM(2020) 284/2 for transmission to Parliament and the Council and, for information, to the European Central Bank, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2020) 120/2, the contents of which were noted;
- adopted the proposal for a Regulation in COM(2020) 337/2 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the national parliaments, together with the impact assessment, the summary thereof and the opinion of the Regulatory Scrutiny Board in SWD(2020) 142, SWD(2020) 143 and SEC(2020) 284, the contents of which were noted.

18. OTHER BUSINESS

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

The Commission referred to the situation in Libya, the growing tension between Turkey and Greece, the health situation in Latin America owing to the COVID-19 pandemic and rising friction between the United States and China.

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At this last meeting of the Commission before the summer recess, which was the first recess for the current Commissioners since the summer of 2019 when she had put the team together with a view to her appointment, the PRESIDENT took stock of the progress made during a particularly turbulent period. She was pleased to note that, as a result of steady and determined effort, the Commission was now seen as an active force and benefited from real visibility. She put this visibility down to what were seen as flagship political initiatives, starting with the European Green Deal. On top of this, there was the NextGenerationEU recovery plan, on an unprecedented scale, that had just been approved by the European Council. It attested to the fact that, despite the major crisis prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the European Union was determined to display its unity. She pointed out that the recovery process was only just beginning.

She also announced her intention of holding a seminar for the Members of the Commission on 2 September to prepare for the State of the Union address that she would make two weeks later before the European Parliament. She indicated that the preparatory work by Commission staff had already begun on the main themes of the address, on the basis of which the Commissioners would be asked to take part in a brainstorming exercise to identify political messages, new ideas and the contributions that each of them could make to the State of the Union address.

She also announced that an article on the NextGenerationEU recovery plan would appear in press throughout Europe a few days later. She asked the Members of the Commission to add their own personal touch by complementing and adapting it, where necessary, to the national specificities of each Member State. Her Cabinet would contact the Cabinets of the Members of the Commission to this end.

Finally, the PRESIDENT announced that Mr Jordi AYET PUIGARNAU, the Director of the Registry at the Secretariat-General since 2005, would be retiring on 1 August. This was thus the last meeting of the Commission that he would attend. She thanked him for his contribution to the smooth functioning of the Commission and wished him a happy retirement.

The Commissioners gave Mr AYET PUIGARNAU a round of applause.

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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 10.57.