



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

PV(2020) 2352 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 11 November 2020

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2352nd meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Tuesday 6 October 2020

(afternoon)

PV(2020) 2352 final

- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

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Single sitting: Tuesday 6 October 2020 (afternoon)

The sitting opened at 13.04 with Mr TIMMERMANS in the chair, the PRESIDENT being absent.

Present:

Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	
Ms VESTAGER	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 SCHMIT	Member	
Mr GENTILONI	Member	Items 8 to 12
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	Items 8 to 12
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDEERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Mr LENARČIČ	Member	
Ms VÁLEAN	Member	
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	Items 8 to 12
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	

Absent:

Ms von der LEYEN	President
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President
Ms GABRIEL	Member

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

Mr HAGER	Chef de cabinet to Mr DOMBROVSKIS
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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	
Ms VILA NUÑEZ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Mr SAMSOM	Chef de cabinet to Mr TIMMERMANS	
Ms NIKOLAY	Chef de cabinet to Ms JOUROVÁ	Items 10 and 11
Mr BUTI	Chef de cabinet to Mr GENTILONI	Items 1 to 8
Mr KERR	Chef de cabinet to Ms DALLI	Items 10 and 11
Mr KRISTÓFFY	Chef de cabinet to Mr VÁRHELYI	Items 8 and 9
Mr GRASSI	Chef de cabinet to Ms SIMSON	Items 1 to 8
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	
Mr VALERO	Secretariat-General	

Secretary: Ms JUHANSONE, Secretary-General, assisted by Ms DEPREZ, Director in the Secretariat-General.

1. AGENDAS

(OJ(2020) 2352/FINAL; SEC(2020) 2352/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) 2352)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 5 October 2020.

3. APPROVAL OF THE 2348TH, 2349TH, 2350TH AND 2351ST MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (9, 15, 23 AND 30 SEPTEMBER 2020)

(PV(2020) 2348; PV(2020) 2348, 2ND PART; PV(2020) 2349; PV(2020) 2349, 2ND PART)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2348th and 2349th meetings and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2350th and 2351st meetings for a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

(RCC(2020) 148 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 2 October 2020 (RCC(2020) 148/2).

It paid particular attention to the following points.

4.1. HORIZONTAL ITEMS

i) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – Trilogue

(point 1.1.1 of the IRG record)

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

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 304.

ii) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – Council Dossier

(point 1.1.3 of the IRG record)

- Digital Europe programme for the period 2021-2027 (Regulation) – FLEGO report – 2018/0227 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(20220) 302/2.

4.2. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

iii) Trilogues

(point 3.1 of the IRG record)

- Amendment of Regulation (EU) 2016/1139 as regards the introduction of capacity limits for Eastern Baltic cod, data collection and control measures in the Baltic Sea, and Regulation (EU) No 508/2014 as regards permanent cessation for fleets fishing for Eastern Baltic cod (Regulation) – HERBST report – 2019/0246 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 303.

- Amendment of Decision No 573/2014/EU on enhanced cooperation between Public Employment Services (PES) (Decision) – PIZARRO report – 2019/0188 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 307.

iv) European Parliament dossiers – October I 2020 part-session

(point 3.2 of the IRG record)

Implementing Acts and Measures

- Objection pursuant to Rule 112(2), (3) and (4)(c) of Parliament's Rules of Procedure – Maximum levels of acrylamide in certain foodstuffs for infants and young children – D067815/03 – 2020/2735 (RPS)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2020) 458.

v) Council Dossiers

(point 3.3 of the IRG record)

- Amendment of Council Regulation (EC) No 1215/2009 introducing exceptional trade measures for countries and territories participating in or linked to the European Union's Stabilisation and Association process (Regulation) – MAUREL report – 2020/0051 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 306.

- Guidelines for the employment policies of the Member States (Council Decision) – GUSMÃO report – 2020/0030 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 308.

- Amendment of 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 (Regulation) – NAGTEGAAL report – 2020/0154 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 310.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

vi) Non-legislative dossier

(point 5.1 of the IRG record)

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- Establishment of an EU Mechanism on Democracy, the Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights – ŠIMEČKA report – 2020/2072 (INI)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2020) 446/2.

vii) Action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its July I 2020 part-session

(point 5.6.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SP(2020) 452/2 on the action taken on the non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its July I 2020 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

viii) Action taken on the legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its September 2020 part-session

(point 5.6.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SP(2020) 455 on the action taken on the legislative opinions and non-legislative resolutions adopted by Parliament at its September 2020 part-session, for transmission to Parliament.

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

ix) Annual meeting of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

(point 6.2.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission took note of SPI(2020) 30/3.

4.5. OTHER BUSINESS

- x) Interinstitutional Agreement on a Mandatory Transparency Register – COM(2016) 627 final**
(point 7.2 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 305/2.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2020) 105)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2020) 105 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held by videoconference on Wednesday 30 September 2020.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2020) 315 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 28 September and 2 October 2020.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2020) 316 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 28 September and 2 October 2020.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2020) 317 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 28 September and 2 October 2020, as archived in Decide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES
(SEC(2020) 318 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 5 and 9 October 2020 and of the finalisation written procedures initiated following the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet on Monday 5 October 2020.

7. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS
(SEC(2020) 319)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS
(PERS(2020) 83)

**7.1. DG MARITIME AFFAIRS AND FISHERIES – CLOSURE OF A
SELECTION PROCEDURE FOR AN AD14/15 DIRECTOR AND
APPOINTMENT OF AN AD15 DIRECTOR**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and after consulting Ms FERREIRA and Mr SINKEVIČIUS, the Commission decided:

- to close internal selection procedure COM/2019/1864 for the post of Director of the 'Fisheries Policy – Mediterranean and Black Sea' Directorate in DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries with immediate effect and without making an appointment;
- to fill that post by transferring in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, Ms Lena ANDERSSON PENCH, an AD15 official and currently Director of the 'European Territorial

Cooperation, Macro-regions, Interreg and Programme Implementation I'
Directorate in DG Regional and Urban Policy.

Unless otherwise indicated, this decision would take effect on a date to be determined.

**7.2. DG INTERPRETATION – INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF A VACANCY
NOTICE FOR AN AD15/16 DIRECTOR-GENERAL
(PERS(2020) 84)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to authorise the publication, under Article 29(1)(a)(i) and (iii) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2020) 84 for the post of Director-General of DG Interpretation.

This decision would take effect immediately.

**7.3. EUROPEAN ANTI-FRAUD OFFICE – INTERNAL PUBLICATION OF
THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR AN AD14/15 DIRECTOR
(PERS(2020) 85)**

The Commission took note of the information in point 3 of PERS(2020) 83 and, on a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, decided:

- to approve the vacancy notice for the post of Director of the ‘Anti-Fraud Knowledge Centre’ in the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), as annexed in document PERS(2020) 85, and to confirm that the Director-General of OLAF was authorised to decide on its publication;
- to carry out the selection procedure in accordance with the Compilation Document on Senior Officials Policy (SEC(2004) 1352);
- to authorise Mr HAHN, the Member of the Commission responsible for budget and administration, to interview all suitable candidates for the post

before the final decision on appointment was taken;

- to confirm that the final appointment decision was taken in accordance with the Commission Decision of 4 June 2013 (C(2013) 3288) on the exercise of powers conferred by the Staff Regulations on the appointing authority and by the Conditions of Employment of Other Servants on the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment.

These decisions would take effect immediately.

**7.4. DG INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT –
CHANGE TO ORGANISATION CHART
(SEC(2020) 335)**

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and Ms URPILAINEN, the Commission decided:

- to change the name of the Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development to the Directorate-General for International Partnerships (DG INTPA);
- to create the post of Deputy Director-General for ‘Human Development, Migration, Governance and Peace’ (INTPA.DDG3);
- to create a new Directorate, INTPA.E ‘Sustainable Finance, Investment and Jobs; Economy that works for the People’, comprising five units and attached to the Deputy Director-General in charge of Directorates D, E and F (INTPA.DDG2);
- to merge Directorates DEVCO.D ‘EU-AU Relations, West and East Africa’ and DEVCO.E ‘Central and Southern Africa, Indian Ocean’ into one Directorate INTPA.A ‘Africa’, attached to the Deputy Director-General in charge of Directorates A, B and C (INTPA.DDG1);

- to change the mandate of four out of the five current Principal Advisers, with all five posts to be abolished on the departure of the current jobholders;
- to abolish one ‘Finance and Contracts’ unit;
- to create a post of Temporary Adviser on ‘Inequalities’, attached to the Director-General;
- to adopt the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2020) 335.

These decisions would take effect on 16 January 2021.

After the restructuring, the total number of units in DG INTPA would decrease from 42 to 41.

8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – AN ECONOMIC AND INVESTMENT PLAN FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS (COM(2020) 641 TO /3; SWD(2020) 223 AND /2; RCC(2020) 157)

9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – 2020 COMMUNICATION ON EU ENLARGEMENT POLICY (COM(2020) 660 TO /3; SWD(2020) 350 AND /2; SWD(2020) 351 TO /3 ; SWD(2020) 352 TO /3 ; SWD(2020) 353 TO /3 ; SWD(2020) 354 TO /3 ; SWD(2020) 355 AND /2; SWD(2020) 356 TO /3 ; RCC(2020) 157)

Mr TIMMERMANS opened the discussion on the enlargement package presented that day, and in particular the Communication on EU enlargement policy, which

included the reports on the progress made in the Western Balkans and Turkey, and the Communication on an economic and investment plan for the Western Balkans.

Mr BORRELL explained that the two proposals went hand in hand and should be presented to the Member States as complementary proposals. First the Commission examined in detail, in an objective and transparent manner, the results of the candidate or potential candidate countries – the Republic of North Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Kosovo*, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Turkey – giving them clear indications on the main reforms to be undertaken as a matter of priority in accordance with the new methodology adopted last March.

He said that following the endorsement by the Member States of the new enlargement methodology and the EU's decision to start accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania, the Commission was that day fulfilling the commitment made at the Zagreb summit to strengthen the enlargement policy and give new impetus to the EU's action in the Western Balkans by presenting a major investment plan for the region.

He explained that this ambitious plan was designed as an instrument for transformation with a view to enlargement. It aimed to support long-term recovery in the region, badly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the faster implementation of reforms to enable Western Balkan candidate countries to move closer to the EU more decisively through greater economic convergence. Moreover, the plan was broadly aligned with the EU's political priorities, standards and *acquis*, in particular the European Green Deal and digitalisation. The Commission was proposing to provide this economic and investment plan with up to EUR 9 billion, without prejudice to the outcome of the interinstitutional negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework for the period 2021 to 2027. Lastly, he pointed out the geostrategic importance of the Western Balkans for the EU and stressed that

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UN Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

the plan also included in the equation Europe's strategic autonomy, through large infrastructure projects.

Mr VÁRHELYI pointed out that this economic and investment plan would enable the EU to activate a double lever, firstly to strengthen the EU's position in the Western Balkans region, where it was competing with other powers, and secondly to speed up the region's European perspective through greater economic rapprochement. He added that the current priority for the Western Balkans was to initiate the recovery that would follow the pandemic and that with the plan proposed by the Commission, this recovery would be sustainable and more socially balanced.

He said that the EUR 9 billion mentioned would come from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance and could be supplemented with an additional EUR 20 billion by the international financial institutions. This major investment could represent a 3.2 to 3.6% growth in gross domestic product in the Western Balkans and contribute to stemming the brain drain the region was experiencing.

He added that the economic and investment plan focused on the areas where EU funding would have the greatest and most rapid impact, notably key infrastructure. That way, flagship projects in the transport, energy, digitalisation, green economy and research and innovation sectors would make this operation more visible. The EU's goal was to make better proposals to its Western Balkan partners than other powers, which required an ambitious offer. This was what it was doing, in particular by proposing more attractive co-financing rates for infrastructure projects, for example in road transport.

He said that the region was highly dependent on coal and lignite for its energy production. These were both highly polluting sources and were therefore detrimental to the health of the population. The progressive exit from these energy sources would bring tangible benefits to the daily lives of local people, as would the energy renovation of buildings or providing broadband networks.

However, Mr VÁRHELYI stressed that all these opportunities were conditional on reforms in the area of the rule of law, without which the investments would not be

made. He felt that with the guidelines given by the Commission in its review of the progress made towards accession and the economic and investment plan proposed that day, the Western Balkans could embark on a profound transformation and, with the EU's help, become a more attractive region for investors. Concluding his presentation he added that the plan took account of the benefits of regional cooperation, which represented around 7% of the gross domestic product of the Western Balkans, as all the flagship projects had a regional dimension through their impact and conditions for participation.

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

- the College's strong support for that day's enlargement policy proposals, in particular the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, with a view to ensuring increased cooperation with a geopolitically strategic area for the EU, while incorporating key aspects such as the green and digital transitions;
- the continuing interest in tying the Western Balkans to a European future, which was further reinforced by the strong presence of other international players in the region;
- the observation that the EU was the only player to have a clear vision for the future of a region which remained a potential source of instability;
- the need to strike the right balance between encouragement on the road to accession, on the one hand, and an objective assessment of the implementation of the necessary reforms, on the other;
- satisfaction that the requisite level of compliance with the basic criteria of the accession process was maintained, that the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) was mentioned and that the preconditions for enlargement were clearly set out in that day's proposals;

- the particular attention to be paid, as indicated in the reports on each of the candidate countries, to the issue of equality in the policies implemented by them;
- the usefulness of practical incentives, thanks to the Economic and Investment Plan, to remedy a degree of ‘enlargement fatigue’ apparent in both the EU and the candidate countries;
- the observation that a good balance had been struck in the Plan between the flagship projects focusing on transport, energy, digital, and research and innovation;
- the usefulness of showcasing those flagship transformational projects, so as to demonstrate the EU’s support for the Western Balkans;
- the clear and almost immediate impact some projects could have on the lives of people in the region;
- a call to invest the necessary resources for young people in the Western Balkans, especially in education and digital skills;
- the welcome inclusion in the Economic and Investment Plan of aspects of the social dimension, in particular for young people;
- in particular, support for the flagship project on the Youth Guarantee, which involved reforms to employment policy and public employment services;
- the need to encourage the Western Balkans to take measures to protect children’s rights, increase women’s participation in the labour market and stop the brain drain;
- the suggestion of appealing to the Western Balkans diaspora in the EU to support the idea of contributing to positive transformation in the region;

- the importance of ensuring compatibility of standards between candidate countries and the EU, particularly in the transport sector;
- a reminder that future transport infrastructure projects should be connected to the trans-European transport network (TEN-T), ideally including rail and inland waterway motorways;
- the need for a public procurement framework that complied with EU rules.

At the end of the discussion, Mr VÁRHELYI stressed the importance of ensuring complementarity between the EU and the Western Balkans in terms of financing the flagship projects listed in the Economic and Investment Plan, which had been chosen for their strategic scope. The EU could further strengthen its position in the region if it was able to mobilise additional funding. He also considered that, while at present there was an obvious gap in social skills in the wider sense between the region and the rest of Europe, the Western Balkans had considerable potential, which was waiting to be exploited. He concluded by announcing that he would visit the region over the coming days to present to them the Economic and Investment Plan the EU was offering them.

Mr BORRELL stressed that offering a credible European perspective was a strategic investment in the security and stability of the Western Balkans, and mentioned in that regard the recently relaunched negotiations between Serbia and Kosovo. He considered it the EU's duty to meet the region's expectations or else others might seek to fill a political vacuum. In his view, the EU had to demonstrate unambiguously that it was still open to enlargement.

Following the presentations and the discussion, the Commission:

- approved the communication in COM(2020) 641/3 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to the national parliaments, together with the staff working document distributed as SWD(2020) 223/2, the contents of which were noted;

- approved the communication in COM(2020) 660/3, for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions and, for information, to national parliaments, together with the staff working documents distributed as SWD(2020) 350/2, SWD(2020) 351/3, SWD(2020) 352/3, SWD(2020) 353/3, SWD(2020) 354/3, SWD(2020) 355/2 and SWD(2020) 356/3, the contents of which were noted.

10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL – A UNION OF EQUALITY – EU ROMA STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

(COM(2020) 620 TO /3; SWD(2020) 530 AND /2; RCC(2020) 156)

11. PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON ROMA EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

(COM(2020) 621 AND /2; RCC(2020) 156)

Mr TIMMERMANS invited Ms JOUROVÁ and Ms DALLI to present the measures envisaged to step up Roma integration. With some estimated six million people, Roma formed the largest ethnic minority in the European Union.

Ms JOUROVÁ began by noting that in 2011 the Commission had approved a Framework for National Roma Inclusion Strategies which was designed to reduce inequalities in terms of education, employment, health and housing between Roma and other Union citizens.

She painted a mixed picture of the progress achieved by those strategies over the last decade. While a higher level of participation by Roma in pre-school education had been recorded, she regretted that 80% of Roma were still at risk of poverty, compared with only 17% of the rest of the population, as were 85% of Roma children, compared with only 20% of other children. 62% of Roma young people were not in employment, education or training, compared with 10% of other young

people. Lastly, only 70% of Roma had access to running water, compared with 98% of the rest of the population.

Efforts should therefore be stepped up both at European and Member State level to include Roma, particularly young people, in society in accordance with the 2020-25 EU anti-racism action plan, which the Commission had approved on 18 September. The demographic outlook for the Union only reinforced the case for a strong renewal of this commitment.

Ms JOUROVÁ explained that the objective of the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation presented that day was to bring about real change in the daily lives of Roma through joint action at European and national level. To that end it set seven ambitions at Union level. While requiring a minimum of joint commitments, the strategy took account of the different situations in the Member States, where the share of the Roma population varied significantly.

A proposal for a Council Recommendation providing the Member States with more detailed guidelines on how to tackle the persistent problems faced by the Roma community was also tabled that day.

She stressed it was important that lessons should be learnt from a decade of measures which had not produced results in line with expectations, and, in particular, Roma should be closely involved in implementing the new strategic framework.

Ms JOUROVÁ ended by warmly thanking Ms DALLI, Mr SCHMIT and Ms FERREIRA for their active cooperation in the part of the strategic framework concerning funding.

Ms DALLI commented briefly on the modest progress achieved by the 2011 Framework for National Roma Inclusion Strategies.

While increased attendance by Roma at early childhood education and care facilities was to be welcomed, it still represented only 42% of the population concerned, against 92% for other young children. The aim should be not just to increase this

attendance rate, but also to reduce segregation within schools and in terms of the types of school prepared to take Roma children. In some cases the attendance rate was even lower than the one just indicated for reasons relating to the precarious health and economic situation of families, which had unfortunately been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The new strategic framework aimed to create an impetus for a paradigm shift from an integration objective to an inclusion objective. She reviewed the seven ambitions set for that purpose, which, for the first time, had been assigned not just quantified targets for 2030 but also indicators enabling progress to be measured.

She listed the three horizontal objectives for Roma equality, inclusion and participation and referred to the quantified targets designed to ensure that the majority of Roma escaped poverty by 2030.

Next, she turned to the four sectoral objectives laid down in the new strategic framework. She singled out the quantified targets designed to ensure that the majority of Roma youth completed upper secondary education, that 45% of Roma women were in paid work, that the life expectancy gap between Roma and the rest of the population was halved and, lastly, that 95% of Roma had access to running water by 2030.

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

- broad support for these renewed and stronger commitments to the Roma with a view to addressing a regrettable situation and building the true Union of Equality to which everyone aspired;
- the relevance of an approach based on Roma equality, inclusion and participation;
- the need to take into account, when implementing the new strategic framework, the complexity of the issue owing to the Roma population's nomadic culture;

- therefore, firstly, the significant cultural change which should be encouraged in order to facilitate, in particular, school attendance and access to healthcare;
- secondly, the obstacles that individual Member States might face and a call for Union aid to be focused on areas with a cross-border dimension;
- the importance of access by Roma to healthcare to limit contagion, promote vaccination or screening and increase early diagnosis of disease;
- a question on planned exchanges of good practice between the Member States, which remained primarily responsible for implementing the change proposed by the Commission in the light of their powers.

In reply, Ms DALLI confirmed that a network would enable good practices to be shared between Member States.

She also confirmed the aim of making the transformation sought by the new Roma strategic framework a reality from an early age with a view to triggering a new virtuous dynamic.

Mr TIMMERMANS welcomed the fact that the approach presented by Ms JOUROVÁ and Ms DALLI was based on practical measures as in his view that was the only way to change the situation on the ground. He also felt that the increasing organisation of the Roma community should make it easier for the Union to identify the parties who should be closely involved in implementing the new strategic framework.

He wound up by noting that there was broad support for the initiatives.

Following these presentations, the Commission, on a proposal from Mr TIMMERMANS, confirmed the formal adoption of the Communication and the proposal for a Recommendation currently set out in documents COM(2020) 620/3 and COM(2020) 621/2 by finalisation written procedures, the deadline for which was set at 10.00 on Wednesday 7 October 2020 (PE/2020/7005 and PE/2020/7004).

12. OTHER BUSINESS

12.1. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Mr TIMMERMANS invited Mr BORRELL to present to the College an overview of the main recent developments in external relations.

With regard to the situation in Belarus, at the special European Council meeting held on 1 and 2 October, EU leaders agreed to impose sanctions on 40 individuals. While the main obstacles to the adoption of this decision had been overcome, he regretted that the list of these individuals did not include the Belarusian President, Alexander Lukashenko. Moreover, the European Council had encouraged the Commission to draw up an overall financial support plan for a democratic Belarus.

Demonstrations in the country were continuing and were most often led by women, whose courage he praised, and the situation appeared to be far from calming down. He questioned the wait-and-see policy of Russia, which appeared to be slow to decide on what action to take to bring the crisis to an end. Nonetheless, he doubted that Russia would propose any resolution that would be consistent with increased democracy in Belarus.

Lastly, he pointed out that Poland and Lithuania had recalled their ambassadors to Belarus for consultations, which had led to other Member States doing the same in solidarity. He concluded this point by explaining that no missions from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were allowed to enter the country, leaving little room for dialogue.

Mr BORRELL then moved on to the situation in Nagorny Karabakh, where the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was continuing to intensify and had already produced a thousand victims on either side, including a large number of civilians. On 4 October, the Azerbaijani authorities had declared their intention to continue hostilities until Armenian troops were withdrawn

from the Nagorny Karabakh enclave, which made continued conflict likely, although the Armenian authorities had said they were ready to start talks with the countries co-chairing the Minsk Group of the OSCE, namely France, Russia and the USA. These countries had arranged to meet this week.

He also confirmed that Turkey had joined the conflict alongside Azerbaijan, providing foreign fighters from Syria.

At this stage, the EU had mobilised EUR 500 000 in humanitarian aid for victims of the conflict.

With regard to Venezuela, he regretted that the diplomatic efforts made by the Union to encourage the country to postpone its parliamentary elections had not been successful. He explained that the opposition would therefore refuse to take part in the election, leaving the way open for the government to obtain a majority in the national parliament.

Finally, in Mali, the situation had greatly improved after a new government took office.

In the course of the short discussion that followed, the Commission referred mainly to the situation in Nagorny Karabakh, Russia's restraint and Turkey's active involvement in the current conflict.

The Commission took note of this information.

12.2. EUROPEAN STRATEGY ON COVID-19 VACCINES

Ms KYRIAKIDES told the College about the latest developments in the implementation of the Union's strategy aimed at accelerating the development, production and deployment of safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19.

The Commission was scheduled to sign a contract with the company Johnson & Johnson on 7 October for the purchase of doses of a future

COVID-19 vaccine. This was the third agreement of its kind after those reached with AstraZeneca and Sanofi-GSK. Exploratory talks were ongoing with three other pharmaceutical companies and, following the requests made by the German Presidency of the Council, the Member States had agreed to increase their contributions to the emergency aid instrument financing the contracts.

Moreover, at the informal Council of health ministers on 2 October, the Member States had called for a coordinated approach to ensure equal access and transparent distribution of diagnoses, vaccines and treatments related to COVID-19, in line with epidemiological criteria. The Commission's services were preparing a proposal for a Council Recommendation along these lines, which could be finalised quickly.

Lastly, she emphasised the importance of pursuing the Union's strategy for the development and deployment of a vaccine against COVID-19, bringing the 27 Member States together to ensure the availability of a safe vaccine throughout the Union, once one was developed.

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

- the issue of the availability of Remdesivir, the first treatment that appeared, in tests on a large enough scale, to have produced encouraging results in hospital patients suffering from a severe form of COVID-19, and which countries worldwide were currently rushing to procure in order to ensure sufficient stocks;
- the progress expected to be made by the Council on the proposal for a Recommendation on a coordinated approach to the restriction of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic made by the Commission in September;

- a question about the date when a vaccine could be available and distributed to the Member States;
- a certain lack of interministerial coordination in the Member States, which could have an impact on the effective implementation of the Union's strategy to fight the pandemic.

Ms KYRIAKIDES said that any predictions about the availability of a vaccine would be risky at this stage. However, depending on the results of the forthcoming clinical trials, which were expected in the next two months, it would probably be possible to specify the timetable for the deployment of a vaccine. As regards the availability of Remdesivir, a public tender process would be launched on 7 October to allow Member States to make orders directly with the manufacturer, which would have to be capable of supplying the product.

The Commission took note of this information.

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The meeting ended at 14.53.