EUROPEAN COMMISSION

SECRETARIAT-GENERAL

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- English translation of the French version which is authentic -

Brussels, 11 November 2020

TEXTE EN

MINUTES

of the 2353rd meeting of the Commission

held in Brussels

(Berlaymont)

on Wednesday 14 October 2020

(morning)

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Single sitting: Wednesday 14 October 2020 (morning)

The sitting opened at 9.10 with Ms von der LEYEN, President, in the chair. Items 11 to 14 were chaired by Mr TIMMERMANS.

Present:

Ms von der LEYEN	President	Items 1 to 10
Mr TIMMERMANS	Executive Vice-President	
Ms VESTAGER	Executive Vice-President	
Mr DOMBROVSKIS	Executive Vice-President	Items 1 to 12 (in part)
Mr ŠEFČOVIČ	Vice-President	
Ms JOUROVÁ	Vice-President	
Ms ŠUICA	Vice-President	
Mr SCHINAS	Vice-President	
Mr HAHN	Member	Items 7 to 14
Mr SCHMIT	Member	Items 1 to 10
Mr GENTILONI	Member	
Mr WOJCIECHOWSKI	Member	
Mr BRETON	Member	
Ms FERREIRA	Member	
Ms KYRIAKIDES	Member	
Mr REYNDERS	Member	
Ms DALLI	Member	
Ms JOHANSSON	Member	
Ms VĂLEAN	Member	
Ms URPILAINEN	Member	
Ms SIMSON	Member	
Mr SINKEVIČIUS	Member	

Absent:

Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES	High Representative / Vice-President
Ms GABRIEL	Member
Mr LENARČIČ	Member
Mr VÁRHELYI	Member
Ms McGUINNESS	Member

The following sat in to represent an absent Member of the Commission:

Mr SERRANO	Chef de cabinet to Mr BORRELL i FONTELLES
Mr MALGAJ	Chef de cabinet to Mr LENARČIČ
Ms TEEDUMÄE	A member of Mr VÁRHELYI's staff

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 VANDENBERGHE	Adviser in the PRESIDENT's Office	
Ms VILA NUÑEZ	Policy Coordinator in the PRESIDENT's Office	Items 7 to 14
Ms SPINANT	Deputy Chief Spokesperson of the Commission	
Mr BARNIER	Head of the Task Force for Relations with the United Kingdom	Item 7
Ms ALLOUIS-LE LOSTEC	Head of Unit in the Secretariat-General	

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

1. AGENDAS
(OJ(2020) 2353/FINAL; SEC(2020) 2353/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) 2353)

The Commission considered the Secretary-General's report on the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet held on Monday 12 October 2020.

3. APPROVAL OF THE 2350TH, 2351ST AND 2352ND MEETINGS OF THE COMMISSION (23 AND 30 SEPTEMBER, 6 OCTOBER 2020)
(PV(2020) 2350)

The Commission approved the minutes of its 2350th meeting, and decided to hold over approval of the minutes of its 2351st and 2352nd meetings until a later meeting.

4. INTERINSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS
(RCC(2020) 155)

The Commission took note of the record of the meeting of the Interinstitutional Relations Group (IRG) held by videoconference on Friday 9 October 2020 (RCC(2020) 155).

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)

– Protection of the Union's budget in case of generalised deficiencies as regards the rule of law in the Member States (Regulation) – SARVAMAA & GARDÍAZABAL RUBIAL report – 2018/0136 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 323/2.

– Rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council – JAHR report – 2018/0216 (COD) / Common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition 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 & KREHL report – 2018/0196 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 324/2.

– 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 & KREHL report – 2018/0196 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 293/3.

– 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 & KREHL report – 2020/0101 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 285/2.

ii) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – European Parliament dossier – October II 2020 part-session
(point 1.1.2 of the IRG record)

<u>Ordinary legislative procedure – First reading</u>

– Rules on support for strategic plans to be drawn up by Member States under the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP Strategic Plans) and financed by the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 1305/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Regulation (EU) No 1307/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council – JAHR report – 2018/0216 (COD) / Financing, management and monitoring of the Common Agricultural Policy and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 1306/2013 (Regulation) – MÜLLER report – 2018/0217 (COD) / Amendment of Regulations (EU) No 1308/2013 establishing a common organisation of the markets in agricultural products, (EU) No 1151/2012 on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs, (EU) No 251/2014 on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of aromatised wine products, (EU) No 228/2013 laying down specific measures for agriculture in the outermost regions of the Union and (EU) No 229/2013 laying down specific measures for agriculture in favour of the smaller Aegean islands (Regulation) – ANDRIEU report – 2018/0218 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2020) 459/2.

iii) 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework – Council Dossiers
(point 1.1.3 of the IRG record)

– Establishment of a Programme for the Union’s action in the field of health for the period 2021-2027 and repeal of Regulation (EU) No 282/2014 (‘EU4Health Programme’) (Regulation) – BUŞOI report – 2020/0102 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 320.

– Nuclear decommissioning assistance programme of the Ignalina nuclear power plant in Lithuania (Ignalina programme); and repeal of Council Regulation (EU) No 1369/2013 (Council Regulation) – HARMS report – 2018/0251 (NLE) / Dedicated financial programme for decommissioning of nuclear facilities and management of radioactive waste, and repeal of Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1368/2013 (Council Regulation) – KOUROUMBASHEV report – 2018/0252 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 150.

4.2. LEGISLATIVE MATTERS

iv) Council Dossiers
(point 3.3 of the IRG record)

– Fixing for 2021 of the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks applicable in the Baltic Sea and amendment of

Regulation (EU) 2020/123, as regards certain fishing opportunities in other waters (Council Regulation) – 2020/0208 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 319.

– Opening of and provision for the management of autonomous Union tariff quotas for certain fishery products for the period 2021-2023 (Council Regulation) – 2020/0144 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 318.

– Amendment of Regulation (EU) No 168/2013 as regards specific measures on L-category end-of-series vehicles in response to the COVID-19 outbreak (Regulation) – GRAPINI report – 2020/0251 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 317.

– European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre and Network of National Coordination Centres (Regulation) – ANDRESEN report – 2018/0328 (COD)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 219/2.

– Coordinated approach to the restrictions of free movement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Council Recommendation) – 2020/0256 (NLE)

The Commission approved the line set out in SI(2020) 327.

4.3. RELATIONS WITH PARLIAMENT

v) Action to be taken on Parliament's legislative resolutions and other resolutions of a legal nature

(SP(2020) 462)

The Commission decided to empower the Members of the Commission responsible for the sectors in question, in agreement with the PRESIDENT and, if necessary, with the other Members concerned, to adopt the amended proposals for transmission to Parliament and the Council, as set out in SP(2020) 462, drawn up following the part-session of Parliament of 5 to 8 October 2020, the contents of which were noted.

vi) Parliament resolutions based on Article 225 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)
(point 5.7 of the IRG record)

– Framework of ethical aspects of artificial intelligence, robotics and related technologies – GARCÍA DEL BLANCO report – 2020/2012 (INL)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2020) 483/2.

– Civil liability regime for artificial intelligence – VOSS report – 2020/2014 (INL)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2020) 484/2.

– Digital Services Act: Adapting commercial and civil law rules for commercial entities operating online – WÖLKEN report – 2020/2019 (INL) / Digital Services Act: Improving the functioning of the Single Market – AGIUS SALIBA report – 2020/2018 (INL)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2020) 485/3.

– An EU legal framework to halt and reverse EU-driven global deforestation – BURKHARDT report – 2020/2006 (INL)

The Commission approved the line set out in SP(2020) 487/2.

vii) Results of Parliament's October II 2020 part-session
(SP(2020) 453)

The Commission took note of the information on Parliament's part-session held from 5 to 8 October 2020 in Brussels, set out in SP(2020) 453.

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

viii) Follow-up to opinions of the European Economic and Social Committee – Plenary session of June 2020
(point 6.3.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission approved document SC(2020) 26/2 on the follow-up by the Commission to the opinions adopted by the European Economic and Social Committee during the June 2020 session, for transmission to that Committee.

4.5. OTHER BUSINESS

ix) 'Building the next generation cloud for businesses and the public sector in the EU' – Signature by interested Member States of a declaration at the Informal Meeting of Ministers in charge of Telecommunications and Digital Policy (Baden-Baden, 14-15 October 2020)
(point 7.1 of the IRG record)

The Commission took note of document SI(2020) 316.

5. COORDINATION OF EXTERNAL ACTION (RCC(2020) 106)

The Commission took note of the operational conclusions in RCC(2020) 106 of the meeting of the Group for External Coordination (EXCO) held by videoconference on Wednesday 7 October 2020.

6. WRITTEN PROCEDURES, EMPOWERMENT AND DELEGATION OF POWERS

6.1. WRITTEN PROCEDURES APPROVED (SEC(2020) 327 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 5 and 9 October 2020.

6.2. EMPOWERMENT (SEC(2020) 328 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted between 5 and 9 October 2020.

6.3. DELEGATION / SUBDELEGATION OF POWERS (SEC(2020) 329 ET SEQ.)

The Commission took note of the Secretariat-General's memoranda recording decisions adopted under the delegation and subdelegation procedure between 5 and 9 October 2020 archived in D*e*cide.

6.4. SIGNIFICANT WRITTEN PROCEDURES (SEC(2020) 330 AND /2)

The Commission took note of the significant written procedures for which the time limit expired between 12 and 16 October 2020 and of the finalisation written procedure initiated following the weekly meeting of Chefs de cabinet on Monday 12 October 2020.

7. CURRENT STATE OF PLAY OF THE NEGOTIATIONS ON THE FUTURE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

The PRESIDENT asked Mr BARNIER to brief the College on the latest developments in the negotiations he was leading on behalf of the European Union with the United Kingdom with a view to an agreement on the future relationship between the two parties.

8. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION – PREPAREDNESS FOR COVID-19 VACCINATION STRATEGIES AND VACCINE DEPLOYMENT (COM(2020) 680 AND /2; RCC(2020) 161)

The PRESIDENT invited Mr SCHINAS and Ms KYRIAKIDES to present the Communication on preparedness for COVID-19 vaccination strategies and vaccine deployment.

By way of introduction, Mr SCHINAS emphasised that the Union was currently experiencing a second wave of the pandemic, but that it was now significantly better prepared than it had been when the first wave hit in March 2020. Since then, the EU had adopted, among other things, a Recovery and Resilience Facility to offset the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy and society. He felt that pooling efforts to secure access to an effective vaccine when the time came was an essential aspect of the crisis response strategy that the Commission proposed to the Union. The Commission had undertaken to allocate some three billion euros to the advance purchase of effective vaccines. Now it was time to ask the Member States to implement certain measures that required preparation on their part. While it was in the EU’s interest, as it was for the rest of the world, to see swift development of effective vaccines, safety remained the top priority. In addition, it was necessary to ensure fair access to these future vaccines, which needed to be affordable, and to lay down rules to determine who would receive the vaccine first and how the vaccines would be distributed and supplied once they were available. It was equally important to remind citizens and Heads of State or Government of what the Union had accomplished over the last few months to combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms KYRIAKIDES said that the objective of the Communication presented that day was to prepare Member States for when one or several vaccines were made available in the future. They would all have access to a vaccine at the same time based on the size of their population, which would ensure that nobody was left behind. However, since limited amounts of the vaccine would be made available initially, precedence would have to be given to certain priority groups, such as hospital staff and vulnerable persons, when the vaccine was distributed, which would require coordination in the Member States. In view of the worrying epidemiological trends currently seen across the whole of Europe, she also highlighted the need to continue to implement non-pharmaceutical measures, including social distancing and the wearing of masks, until a vaccine was found, in order to break the chains of transmission. She ended by highlighting that the three key guiding principles for the Communication were preparedness, trust and safety.

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

– the importance of determining the priority groups who would be the first to receive any safe and effective vaccine(s) made available;

– the need to focus the Commission’s messages on the fact that there would be no compromise on vaccine safety;

– the need to counter disinformation and fake news on vaccines;

– a reminder of the vital importance of fostering citizens' trust in an effective vaccine;

– the need to keep in mind the demographic trends observed in Europe and beyond, as well as the Union's role in the health domain, which could be addressed at the upcoming Conference on the Future of Europe.

The PRESIDENT wrapped up the discussion by emphasising the fact that, under normal circumstances, vaccine development took several years, and the first candidate vaccines would probably not guarantee full immunity from the outset. In addition, the Commission had made every effort to guarantee a supply of vaccines not only for the Union, but also for low- and middle-income countries. Lastly, she congratulated Ms KYRIAKIDES on having successfully secured a decision from the EU's Health Ministers with regard to a single 'colour code' to differentiate between areas where the virus was circulating.

Following these presentations, the Commission, on a proposal from the PRESIDENT, confirmed the adoption of the Communication in COM(2020) 680/2 by the finalisation written procedure, the deadline for which was set at 10.00 on Thursday 15 October 2020 (PE/2020/7336).

9. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – A RENOVATION WAVE FOR EUROPE – GREENING OUR BUILDINGS, CREATING JOBS, IMPROVING LIVES (COM(2020) 662 TO /3; SWD(2020) 550 AND /2; RCC(2020) 160)

10. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS ON

AN EU STRATEGY TO REDUCE METHANE EMISSIONS (COM(2020) 663 TO /3; RCC(2020) 160)

The PRESIDENT opened the College's discussion on the package of environmental measures tabled for approval by highlighting the high and binding targets the Union had set itself as part of its fight against climate change. It was only by raising its target and setting itself the objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 that the EU could be climate-neutral by 2050. She considered that the EU needed to be able to draw on market-based tools and measures, such as the emissions trading system, and on fair burden-sharing between Member States.

The December European Council meeting would be an important milestone in that the Commission would have to secure the Member States' agreement on this 2030 target by encouraging an approach focused on each sector of the economy rather than on each Member State.

With regard to the Communication that set out to trigger a wave of renovation in Europe, she explained the importance given to the initiative to create a New European Bauhaus. This initiative reflected the Union's ambition of working towards a sustainable future as part of a project that was large scale, but easily attainable, by creating a close link between the technological aspects of renovating buildings to make them more energy efficient, and the cultural, artistic and social aspects. Combating climate change and protecting the environment required a rethink of lifestyles and working conditions, as well as the means and objectives of the Union's industrial policy.

She explained that the aim of the New Bauhaus initiative was to bring the European Green Deal closer to citizens by providing a concrete example of how the comfort and appeal of sustainable development were powerful factors in improving living conditions.

She explained that the European Bauhaus would be rolled out in three phases, namely (i) the design phase, in order to develop ideas and principles and shape the movement, (ii) the implementation phase, which would begin with five New European Bauhaus projects in different EU Member States, and (iii) the third phase, which would involve disseminating the principles of the New European Bauhaus, since the idea was that it should develop and expand beyond Europe's borders to lead the way in the twin green and digital transitions.

Mr TIMMERMANS explained that the plan for a renovation wave for Europe would give the Union the opportunity to pursue its climate objectives over the long term, and would yield concrete results in the short term. He considered that this important initiative was an essential component of the European Green Deal and would now be a flagship project for stimulating a return to economic growth.

He commented that it was not only about the climate and energy. The aim was also to transform a key ecosystem and support jobs and the activity of small and medium-sized enterprises, while boosting the circular economy and competitiveness.

Buildings accounted for around 40% of total energy consumption in the EU and 36% of greenhouse gas emissions. Renovating building stock was therefore vital in order to reduce said energy consumption and emissions, achieve the target set for 2030 and become climate neutral by 2050, and increase the EU's resilience to the effects of climate change.

However, large-scale investment in the renovation of buildings and future regulation would need to be supplemented by support measures to ensure compliance with the rules, and by the requisite administrative competences and capacity.

Nevertheless, the resources allocated to this flagship project and the coordination action it would involve in all the Member States provided an opportunity to create a virtuous circle which, starting with public buildings and those that were the least energy efficient, would increase demand and therefore supply, stimulate more sustainable innovation and bring about a reduction in costs.

Ms SIMSON noted that the Commission was presenting its building renovation strategy at a time when there was growing interest in the sector in all the Member States, which made it necessary to put in place an appropriate framework so that a project on this scale could be rolled out in the context of the economic recovery.

Building renovation was becoming a key focus of Member States' recovery strategies. In the space of a few weeks, France, for example, had undertaken to invest some EUR 7 billion in such a plan, the Netherlands was due to insulate 8 million homes by 2030, Greece and Ireland had promised to renovate 600 000 and 500 000 buildings respectively, while Italy had introduced a tax deduction of 110% for spending on energy efficiency improvements and the reduction of seismic risks.

She said that the building stock in the EU was old, with 85% of buildings over 20 years old, consuming on average twice as much energy as new-builds. In order to attain the objective of a 55% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, the EU would therefore have to reduce the emissions of buildings by 60%, their final energy consumption by 14% and energy consumption for heating and cooling by 18% compared to 2015 levels.

She pointed out that the crisis triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic had added a new dimension to this flagship project because renovation of buildings could drive growth and jobs. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), for each tranche of EUR 1 million invested, 10 new jobs were likely to be created. The Commission estimated that the investment needs for renovation could reach EUR 275 billion by 2030.

Thus, this large-scale project was a major opportunity for the construction sector, which had been hit hard by the crisis and which was 90% composed of small and medium-sized enterprises.

However, she stressed that in view of the European Green Deal, renovation should not be limited to reducing emissions or energy bills. Instead, it should be seen as a way of transforming buildings into smart habitats with active energy consumption control and replacing fossil fuels with green energy for heating and cooling, with recharging points for e-mobility or connections to energy districts or communities.

For that reason, the renovation strategy had an ambitious but simple objective of doubling the renovation rate from 1% to 2%, which meant that 35 million public and private building units would have to be renovated by 2030, which would create 160 000 new jobs over the same period.

Ms SIMSON said that the Recovery and Resilience Facility provided an unprecedented opportunity and that if the Member States were to mobilise one third of the fund, EUR 80 billion could be earmarked for renovation.

Moreover, the Commission had identified the obstacles at each stage of the renovation supply chain, such as the lack of information and advice, the lack of financial instruments and suitable technological tools, the lack of skilled labour as well as support for the most vulnerable. For each of these obstacles, the Commission was proposing specific measures such as the increased use of energy performance certificates, the introduction of minimum energy performance standards for buildings and the extension of the obligation for public authorities to renovate public buildings.

Finally, she mentioned the social dimension to the building renovation wave launched by the Commission, since 34 million people in the EU were experiencing energy poverty and were not always able to heat or cool their accommodation properly.

That was why the Commission had approved a recommendation and guidelines for Member States to combat energy poverty and why it had proposed an alliance for affordable accommodation to support 100 flagship projects across Europe, placing the emphasis on district renovation. She added that minimum energy performance standards could also help to ensure a basic level of energy efficiency and comfort for all.

To conclude her presentation, she welcomed the fact that the proposed new integrated approach to building renovation could provide a framework for the New European Bauhaus initiative announced by the PRESIDENT in her State of the Union address.

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

– the opportunity offered by the wave of energy renovation of buildings for the large-scale development of the charging infrastructure needed for electric vehicles;

– the importance of taking local and regional circumstances into account when implementing the strategy, the various aspects of which could be supported by cohesion policy, whether for project funding, skills development or innovation;

– the need to take demographic trends in the EU into account, in particular the fact that one third of homes was made up of single-person households;

– the desirability of having building accessibility objectives fully integrated into the strategy in line with the EU's legal obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities;

– the College's full and total support for the New European Bauhaus initiative, which would allow a brand image to be given to the building renovation project and civil society and industry to take ownership of the strategy.

Ms SIMSON presented to the College the second initiative of the environmental package proposed that day, namely the new EU strategy to tackle methane emissions. Methane was the second most abundant greenhouse gas after carbon dioxide and it would be impossible for the EU to achieve its ambition by 2030 without reducing methane emissions by 35-37%. 95% of anthropogenic methane emissions came from the treatment of waste, agriculture and energy – all aspects included in the strategy.

She mentioned in particular the field of energy where methane emissions could be reduced rapidly and by almost half at no net cost. Methane escaped during the production, transport and use of oil and gas, but also from coal mines.

The first objective proposed was to improve the monitoring, reporting and the detection of methane leaks and their repair. It was therefore planned that the Commission would support voluntary industry initiatives to speed up interventions on the ground while preparing legislative initiatives scheduled for 2021.

She said that Europe, as the world's largest energy importer, must show the way but that it could not do so alone, bearing in mind that it was responsible for only 5% of global methane emissions in the energy sector. The EU would therefore have to work with its international partners to tackle methane emissions all along the supply chain of the energy it imported.

In order to do so, it would rely in particular on energy diplomacy to encourage fossil fuel producers to improve their own regulatory framework for methane. Moreover, in cooperation with the United Nations Environment Programme, the EU would support the establishment of an international methane observatory to collect and compare data on methane emissions worldwide.

She said that the Commission would contribute financially under the Horizon 2020 budget but also through its satellite data since the EU played a leading role at global level in the field of satellite monitoring of the environment.

The Commission would also consider whether methane emission standards should be introduced for the fossil fuels imported and consumed in Europe in order to encourage international producers to step up their efforts in this area.

Ms SIMSON said the proposed strategy marked a new stage in the EU's clean energy approach by ensuring that gas and other fossil fuels remained in its energy mix during the transition, but ensuring that their impact in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and global warming was as limited as possible, which was now technically and economically feasible at limited cost.

Finally, she recalled that the Commission had also presented that day the Annual State of the Energy Union report, accompanied by technical reports, and the 27 country analyses of the Member States' national energy and climate plans.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

– approved the Communication in COM(2020) 662/3 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) 550/2, the contents of which were noted;

– approved the Communication in COM(2020) 663/3 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.

11. COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE, AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS – CHEMICALS STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABILITY – TOWARDS A TOXIC-FREE ENVIRONMENT
(COM(2020) 667 TO /3; SWD(2020) 247 TO SWD(2020) 251; SWD(2020) 225; RCC(2020) 158)

12. PROPOSAL FOR A DECISION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL ON A GENERAL UNION ENVIRONMENT ACTION PROGRAMME TO 2030
(COM(2020) 652 TO /3; RCC(2020) 158)

Mr TIMMERMANS introduced the new chemicals strategy, the aim of which was to ensure that these substances, which were ubiquitous in Europeans' daily lives, continued to play their part, while avoiding damage to human health and the environment, and supporting innovation and competitiveness.

Mr SINKEVIČIUS stressed that this was the first step towards the zero-pollution target announced in the European Green Deal, in a toxic-free environment.

He put the strategy into context by describing some of the societal and economic aspects. In particular, he highlighted the contribution of chemicals to well-being, as well as to the green and digital transition of Europe's economy and society. Chemicals was the fourth largest industry in the EU.

He welcomed the balanced nature of the strategy, thanks to the two pillars on which it was based.

He mentioned, first, that it proposed much greater protection of human health and the environment against the dangers of harmful chemicals, with particular attention paid to vulnerable groups, starting with children.

Despite the sophisticated and protective regulatory framework for chemicals which the EU had already equipped itself with, there were still substances that caused cancer, damaged immune, respiratory, endocrine, reproductive and cardiovascular systems, or weakened the human body's defences and ability to respond to vaccines, making it more vulnerable to disease.

The urgent need to combat these substances was undeniable and backed up by scientific knowledge. The strategy therefore proposed to replace them with safe and sustainable substances, avoid the most harmful substances in consumer products and, more generally, ensure that all chemicals were used in a safer and more sustainable way.

Use of the most harmful chemicals was not ruled out if, in the absence of a valid alternative, they were indispensable for health, safety or the functioning of society.

Mr SINKEVIČIUS then turned to the second pillar of the strategy, namely support for innovation and competitiveness.

The objective of making chemicals safer and more sustainable was both a necessity and an economic opportunity to support the green transition of the chemicals sector and its value chains.

The aim was to encourage new safe and sustainable chemicals and materials from the design stage, i.e. from production to end of life. He also referred to the measures proposed in the strategy to boost industrial innovation so that such chemicals became the norm on the EU market and a global standard.

In concluding, Mr SINKEVIČIUS noted the multi-sectoral implications of the strategy, which would concern most Commissioners. He warmly thanked the Members who had been involved in formulating the strategy and their teams, in particular Mr TIMMERMANS, Mr BRETON and Ms KYRIAKIDES.

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

– the timeliness of the strategy in terms of making the most of the European Green Deal and NextGenerationEU;

– its balance between ambition and realism, and between protection of citizens and support for competitiveness;

– the recognition of growing public concern about harmful chemicals;

– the need to assist and guide the industry as it underwent this necessary transition;

– the observation that the industries concerned were generally energy intensive;

– the appropriateness of limiting the planned amendments to the Regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH).

At the end of the discussion, Mr TIMMERMANS praised the quality of the text presented and noted the College's broad support for the strategy.

He also mentioned the broad support expressed for the proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030.

Following these presentations, the Commission:

– approved the communication in COM(2020) 667/3, for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European 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) 247, SWD(2020) 248, SWD(2020) 249 and SWD(2020) 250, as well as the fitness check and summary thereof distributed as SWD(2020) 251 and SWD(2020) 225 respectively, the contents of which were noted;

– adopted the proposal for a Decision in COM(2020) 652/3 for transmission to Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and the national parliaments.

13. ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY MATTERS (SEC(2020) 331 AND /2)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (PERS(2020) 86 AND /2)

At the invitation of Mr TIMMERMANS, Mr HAHN presented an additional proposal for an administrative decision submitted directly to the College for approval.

It was proposed to appoint Ms Sandra GALLINA to the post of Director-General of the Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety.

He highlighted Ms GALLINA's outstanding skills, remarkable career and recognised expertise, which would be valuable assets in her new post.

Mr HAHN then explained in detail the reorganisation of the Directorate-General for Budget also proposed that day, which was aimed at strengthening the Commission's borrowing and lending capacities as it prepared for the first issuances under the European instrument for temporary support to mitigate unemployment risks in an emergency (SURE). The Commission had long been an active issuer, as in 2011 and 2012, when it had raised almost EUR 50 billion on the capital markets in the midst of the euro crisis. A new stage had now been entered with NextGenerationEU, since almost EUR 1 billion of bonds would be issued in the coming years.

Mr HAHN announced that standard procedures would be initiated to set up the bank syndicates needed to support three SURE transactions over the course of late October and November. The emergence of a new 'triple A' listed issuer able to issue euro-denominated debt securities in such volumes was already attracting a great deal of interest on the part of international investors.

The Commission would issue SURE bonds as 'social bonds' on the basis of a new framework subject to independent assessment. EU SURE bonds would double outstanding social bonds, thus broadening the investor base.

While SURE entailed new activities, NextGenerationEU represented much larger sums, amounting to around EUR 800 billion. The revenue would be used to support EU policies, award grants and loans to Member States, and issue green bonds, each of which required different sources of financing. It was therefore essential to have a robust governance structure for borrowing activity.

The Directorate-General for Budget therefore had to be reorganised so as to clearly separate market activities from risk management. A new borrowing and lending unit (E3) had thus been set up, which would act as the Commission's internal debt management office. One of the two Deputy Directors-General would manage a robust and comprehensive risk management and governance structure, independently of the Director-General, in order to ensure the Commission applied the highest standards of risk control, accountability and reporting.

13.1. DG HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY – APPOINTMENT OF AN AD15/16 DIRECTOR-GENERAL (PERS(2020) 60 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 Health and Food Safety (PERS(2020) 60 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 23 September and 8 October 2020 (PERS(2020) 60/3 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 after consulting Ms KYRIAKIDES, it then decided to appoint Ms Sandra GALLINA to the post.

This decision would take effect on 16 October 2020.

13.2. DG COMPETITION – APPOINTMENT OF AN AD14/15 DIRECTOR (PERS(2020) 87 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 'Cartels' Directorate in DG Communication (PERS(2020) 87).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 29 July and 10 September 2020 (PERS(2020) 87/2 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 VESTAGER, it then decided to appoint Ms Maria JASPERS to the post.

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

13.3. DG EUROPEAN CIVIL PROTECTION AND HUMANITARIAN AID OPERATIONS (ECHO) – APPOINTMENT OF AN AD14/15 DIRECTOR (PERS(2020) 17 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 of the 'Emergency Management and rescEU' Directorate in DG European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) (PERS(2020) 17 and /2).

It took note of the opinions of the Consultative Committee on Appointments of 16 and 30 July 2020 (PERS(2020) 17/3 and /4).

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 Mr LENARČIČ, it then decided to appoint Mr Hans DAS to the post.

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

13.4. DG BUDGET – AMENDMENT OF THE ORGANISATION CHART (SEC(2020) 345)

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

– to revoke, for the specific case of borrowing and lending operations, the delegation conferring on the Director-General concerned the power to adopt changes to the organisation chart in question by simplified procedure and, consequently, to exercise this power itself as regards changing the organisation chart;

– to approve the amendment to the mandate of the Deputy Director-General BUDG.DGA2 whereby only Units E.1 and E.3 would report directly to him;

– to approve the abolition of the Task Force on Administrative Efficiency/Business Process Reengineering;

– to approve the creation of a new unit BUDG.D.1, ‘Coordination, partnership with Member States, EDES’, and consequently, to revise the order of the current units in Directorate D;

– to approve the reorganisation of Directorate BUDG.E, renamed ‘Asset, debt and financial risk management’, including the creation of a fifth unit BUDG.E.4, ‘Legal and Policy Coordination’;

– to approve the creation of a new temporary post of Principal Adviser ‘Asset and debt management’;

– to approve the merging of Units BUDG.R.3 and R.4 into a new Unit BUDG.R.3 ‘IT Systems, Tools and infrastructure’;

– to approve the new organisation chart set out in SEC(2020) 345;

– to approve, as of 1 December 2020, the transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, of Ms Daniela GHEORGHE, currently Director of the ‘Resources’ Directorate (BUDG.R), to the vacant post of Principal Adviser of the ‘Performance Management’ Task Force, in charge of monitoring the activities of the Task Force transferred to Unit BUDG.02; the Task Force and post of Principal Adviser would be abolished when Ms Daniela GHEORGHE retired;

– to approve, as of 1 December 2020, the transfer in the interest of the service, under Article 7 of the Staff Regulations, of Mr Reinder VAN DER ZEE, currently Director of the ‘Audit in EU Agencies and other autonomous bodies’ Directorate (IAS.A) in the Internal Audit Service, to the post of Director of the ‘Resources’ Directorate (BUDG.R).

Unless indicated otherwise, these decisions would take effect on 1 November 2020.

Following the reorganisation, the total number of units in DG Budget would increase from 30 to 31.

13.5. DG BUDGET – INTERNAL AND INTERINSTITUTIONAL (AT GRADE AD15/16) AND EXTERNAL (AT GRADE AD15) PUBLICATION OF THE VACANCY NOTICE FOR THE POST OF DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL (PERS(2020) 88)

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), Article 29(1)(b) and Article 29(2) of the Staff Regulations, of the vacancy notice in PERS(2020) 88 for the post of Deputy Director-General of DG Budget.

This decision would take effect immediately.

13.6. DG COMMUNICATION – SECONDMENT OF AN AD14 OFFICIAL IN THE INTERESTS OF THE SERVICE UNDER ARTICLES 37 AND 38 OF THE STAFF REGULATIONS

On a proposal from Mr HAHN, in agreement with the PRESIDENT, the Commission decided to second in the interests of the service, under

Articles 37 and 38 of the Staff Regulations, Mr Telmo BALTAZAR, an AD14 official and currently Principal Adviser for Corporate and Political Communication in DG Communication, to the Permanent Representation of Portugal in Brussels for a duration of eight months.

This decision would take effect on 1 December 2020.

13.7. ANNUAL REPORT ON THE APPLICATION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IN 2019 (SEC(2020) 344)

The Commission took note of the annual report on the application of the Code of Conduct for the Members of the European Commission in 2019 set out in SEC(2020) 344.

13.8. RISK MANAGEMENT IN 2020 RELATED TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS (SEC(2020) 343)

The Commission took note of SEC(2020) 343.

14. OTHER BUSINESS

DECISION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION OF 12 OCTOBER 2020 AMENDING DECISION P(2019) 1 OF 1 DECEMBER 2019 ON THE ORGANISATION OF RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION (P(2020) 7)

The Commission took note of the decision of the PRESIDENT set out in P(2020) 7.

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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 12.00.